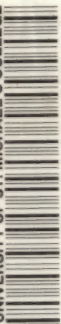


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# MEDITATIONS


FOR THE USE OF

## SEMINARIANS AND PRIESTS

BY

Very Rev. L. BRANCHEREAU, S. S.

Translated and adapted



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Volume VI

THE BLESSED VIRGIN  
THE SAINTS

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NEW YORK, CINCINNATI, CHICAGO  
BENZIGER BROTHERS  
Printers to the Holy Apostolic See

1918

HOLY REDEEMER LIBRARY, WINDSOR

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# CONTENTS

## I. THE BLESSED VIRGIN

I	Devotion to the Blessed Virgin: its foundation.....	1
II	Devotion to the Blessed Virgin: its history.....	8
III	Immaculate Conception.....	15
IV	Nativity of the Blessed Virgin.....	23
V	Presentation of the Blessed Virgin: Mary's consecration.....	30
VI	Presentation of the Blessed Virgin: Mary's life in the Temple.....	38
VII	Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin...	45
VIII	Visitation of the Blessed Virgin.....	53
IX	Purification of the Blessed Virgin...	61
X	Compassion of the Blessed Virgin...	69
XI	Assumption of the Blessed Virgin...	78
XII	Month of Mary.....	84

## II. THE SAINTS

XIII	St. Francis Xavier.....	90
XIV	St. Ambrose.....	99
XV	St. John the Evangelist.....	108
XVI	St. Peter's Chair at Rome.....	117
XVII	Conversion of St. Paul.....	125
XVIII	St. Francis de Sales.....	134
XIX	St. Thomas Aquinas.....	141
XX	St. Joseph.....	149

XXI	St. Mark.....	157
XXII	St. Barnabas.....	165
XXIII	St. Aloysius.....	173
XXIV	St. John the Baptist.....	180
XXV	St. Peter and St. Paul.....	189
XXVI	St. Vincent de Paul.....	198
XXVII	Guardian Angels.....	206
XXVIII	St. Theresa.....	214
XXIX	St. Luke.....	222
XXX	All Saints.....	230
XXXI	All Souls.....	239
XXXII	St. Charles.....	246

## MORNING PRAYERS

Benedicta sit sancta et individua Trinitas, nunc et semper, et per infinita sæcula sæculorum. Amen.

I adore thee, most august Majesty, one God, in three persons; I adore thy divine perfections incomprehensible to men and angels. Being nothing of myself and unable to honor thee as thou deservest to be honored, I offer thee all the homage and praise which thy Incarnate Word offers for me in heaven and upon earth, and with my whole heart, I unite in all that his Holy Spirit operates for thy glory in his members. Most holy and most adorable Trinity, suffer me, through Jesus Christ, our mediator with thee, and by the grace of his Holy Spirit, to offer thee my feeble tribute of homage.

### ACT OF ADORATION.

Eternal Father, I adore thee as my Creator; I revere that boundless love and goodness which induced thy supreme Majesty to look down upon a less than nothing, and to bring me into existence. Eternal Word, I adore thee as my Redeemer who, equal to thy Father, didst, in the womb of thy mother, make thyself like unto us, taking upon thyself the form of a servant, living in poverty and dying in ignominy, to rise again in glory like unto that of thy Father, in order to teach us to live penitently, and to resign ourselves submis-

sively to our sentence of death, with the full assurance of being made, by the resurrection, partakers of the glory of the children of God. Divine Spirit, I adore thee, the sanctifier of my soul, who dost consume sin in my heart by the fire of thy holy love, and dost descend continually into this abyss of iniquity, my heart, in order that by breathing into it that life-giving holiness which thou dost draw from the bosom of the Father and the Son, thou mayest make me worthy of being associated with them in their glory.

#### ACT OF THANKSGIVING.

Eternal Father, I thank thee for having with such great love created me; having with so much patience borne with me in spite of my transgressions, and especially for having preserved me during the past night and given me this day in which to serve and honor thee. Son of God, I thank thee for having by the labors of thy life and the sufferings of thy death preserved me a thousand times from hell, and merited for me all the blessings which are found in thy Church. Divine Spirit, I thank thee for having deigned to infuse so many gifts and graces into my soul and for having so often begotten me anew by thy sanctifying grace, notwithstanding all the contempt I have shown for thy blessings.

#### ACT OF CONTRITION.

Pardon, I beseech thee, Eternal Father, the wretched use I have made of the body and the soul

which thou hast given me with so much goodness, and hast preserved with so much mercy. I beg forgiveness, O Son of God, for having profited so little by the holy example of thy life, by the counsels of thy holy Gospel, and by the graces of all thy holy Sacraments. Divine Spirit, forgive me the contempt which I have shown for thy inspirations, for thy lights and for that lively repentance which it hath pleased thee to excite in my soul.

#### ACT OF OBLATION.

Eternal Father, I offer thee all the actions of this day, and I renounce all the self-satisfaction I might feel in them. Eternal Word, I offer thee all my thoughts and words, and beforehand I condemn all that are vain and useless. Spirit of God, I consecrate to thee all the affections of my heart, and I renounce all the irregular desires of nature.

#### ACT OF RESIGNATION.

Eternal Father, I renounce all confidence in my own strength and give myself entirely to thee, that thou mayest be my strength and support. Son of God, I condemn all the presumption of my own mind and give myself up entirely to thee, to be governed by thy wisdom alone. Divine Spirit, I sacrifice to thee all my natural inclinations, in order to follow the desires of sanctity which thou implantest in pious souls. Eternal Father, do thou perfect my soul; Son of God, do thou enlighten it; Holy Spirit, do thou direct it.

## Pater Noster. Ave Maria. Credo.

I offer thee once more, O my God, my thoughts, my words, and my actions, in union with those of Jesus Christ, that they may be worthy of being received by thee; and I renounce every intention, but that which he would have, were he upon earth and in my place. I unite, O my God, with his Divine Spirit, who causes thee to be loved and adored by all the angels and saints, and who fills heaven and earth with holy praises of thee, that aided by that Holy Spirit I may join with all those creatures who honor thee, and especially with those who honor thee by mental prayer.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> From the *Journée Chrétienne* of Father Olier.

*Some may prefer the following shorter form of morning prayers.*

Benedicta sit sancta et individua Trinitas, nunc et semper et per infinita sæcula sæculorum. Amen.

O Almighty and Eternal God: in union with all thy elect in heaven and on earth, I adore thee, I love thee, I praise and thank thee for all the gifts of nature and grace, which I have received from thy infinite goodness. I thank thee principally for having created me to thy image and likeness, and preserved me to this day: for having given thy only begotten Son to suffer death for me on the cross, and to wash away my sins with his most precious blood. I thank thee for having called me to the faith of the Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church; for having so often pardoned me my sins, for having watched over me during this past night, and preserved me from a sudden death and from all the other evils which might have befallen me, had I not been protected by thy merciful and watchful Providence.

Would that I could make thee, O Lord, in return for all thy mercies, an offering of gratitude and love proportionate to their number and greatness. Of myself indeed I am nothing, have nothing, and can do nothing worthy of thee. But since, by a wonderful device of thy wisdom and love, I have access to thy majesty through Christ my Savior, I humbly offer thee, in union with him and through his Sacred Heart, whatever I possess, my body, my senses, all the powers of my soul. I firmly purpose by thy divine grace not to think, say or do anything unworthy of one called to the priesthood.



3. *To unite ourselves to Jesus Christ in order to appear before his Father in his name; and implore the aid of the Holy Ghost for our meditation.*

Not in my own name, O my God, have I the blindness to address my prayer to thee; it is in the name of thy well-beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ; all my confidence is in him. Clothed in his merits I present myself before thee, to implore thy grace, like Jacob of old clad in the garments of his elder brother, presenting himself before his father to ask his blessing. I know that of myself I can have neither a good thought nor even a desire that shall conduce to my salvation. Have mercy on me, O God! I humbly confess my nothingness and my wretchedness; I renounce my own thoughts and my earthly affections, and give myself up entirely to thy divine Spirit. Come then, O Holy Ghost! enlighten my darkness; inflame my lukewarmness; strengthen my weakness. I desire to make this meditation by thy lights, by thy impulse, and under thy guidance.

Holy Virgin, mother of divine wisdom and purest love help me, I beseech Thee, to obtain this grace.

*After Meditation.*

O Jesu vivens in Maria, veni, et vive in famulis tuis, in spiritu sanctitatis tuæ, in plenitudine virtutis tuæ, in perfectione viarum tuarum, in veritate virtutum tuarum, in communione mysteriorum tuorum; dominare omni adversæ potestati in Spiritu tuo ad gloriam Patris. Amen.



# I. THE BLESSED VIRGIN

## I

### DEVOTION TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN

#### A. ITS FOUNDATIONS

##### SUMMARY

- I. We will adore in Christ our perfect model of devotion to the Blessed Virgin. In union with all who honor her, we will proclaim her worthy of all praise.
- II. We will consider that the Blessed Virgin has three claims on our devotion.

1. *Her dignity*, which makes her deserving of the homage of men and angels.

2. *Her holiness*, the sublimity and perfection of which corresponded with the eminence of her dignity. She is a model for our imitation.

3. *Her power of intercession*, which inspires us with a boundless confidence in her.

- III. We will recall how much we owe to the Blessed Virgin's intercession.

We will renew our consecration to her.

We will resolve:

1. To celebrate all her feasts as piously as possible;

2. To have recourse to her in all temptations and trials.

*Dignare me laudare te, Virgo sacrata; da mihi virtutem contra hostes tuos.*

## ADORATION

Let us adore in Christ our perfect model of devotion to the Blessed Virgin. During his life at Nazareth, he was subject to her, helping her at work and consoling her in her sorrows.

It is at her request he performs his first miracle. With his last breath on the cross, he tenderly entrusts her to his beloved disciple.

But how much greater honor does he show her in heaven. Did he not extend to her the privilege of the resurrection? Did he not prepare a glorious triumph in heaven, where he enthroned her above the angels? By the glory with which he surrounds her, does he not teach us how he wishes us to honor her?

In union with holy Church, in union with all those who profess to belong to Mary, in union with all societies and sodalities established in her honor, let us proclaim her worthy of all praise and homage. Let us fondly repeat: *Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.*

## CONSIDERATIONS

The Blessed Virgin has three claims on our devotion.

1. *Her dignity* makes her deserving of the homage of men and angels. After the super-eminent dignity of Christ's humanity, there is none other comparable to that of the Blessed Virgin.

The sacerdotal character makes us co-operators of the incarnate Word in his work of redemption. But far above that dignity is Mary's divine maternity by virtue of which she was privileged to be associated with the holy Trinity in producing the union of the Word and human nature; for in her and by her, was this great mystery accomplished. Therein we see the foundation of all her greatness, elevating her above men and angels, a privilege to which no other creature, however great and noble, can pretend.

Says St. Anselm: "To say that Mary is the Mother of God surpasses all the grandest things we can think or utter, save the infinity of God. On one hand, we have God, the immense, the eternal, the sovereign Majesty; on the other, a human creature, holy indeed, but, like every creature, finite: and between these two the bond of maternity." *Fecit mihi magna qui potens est.*

2. *Her holiness*, corresponding to the emi-

nence of her dignity. The utterances of the Holy Spirit, the unanimous testimony of tradition, the belief of the faithful, all agree in establishing this truth.

Holiness consists in this: that a rational creature, in the exercise of his free will, conform to the will of God. Masters of the spiritual life point out three degrees. In the first, the soul is detached from sin: this is the *via purgativa*. In the second, it becomes firmly established in the practice of the virtues: this is the *via illuminativa*. In the third, it unites itself to God by the practice of pure love: this is the *via unitiva*.

Now, our Blessed Mother passed through all these. She was entirely free from sin, even in her conception. Never did her faithfulness to God waver. Never was she led from him by those culpable failings, those inordinate attachments, those evil attractions which so often entice us from the line of duty. The numerous imperfections over which the saints grieved, from which even the purest lives are not free, never gained an entrance into her immaculate soul.

But this freedom from sin is only the negative side of her holiness. Her life manifested

the practice of all the virtues. It is true that Scripture has little to say of her virtues. The Annunciation reveals her chastity; her humility shines through her words at the Visitation; at the wedding-feast of Cana she shows her charity. Even without these precious indications, we can show that Mary practiced all the virtues in the highest degree.

Our perfection in virtue depends on the measure of grace accorded us and of our correspondence with that grace. But Mary possessed the plenitude of grace; never did she resist its inspirations.

The loftiness of her sanctity consisted in a most perfect act of love that embraced the sublimest degree of all the virtues. *Talis fuit Maria*, says St. Ambrose, *ut ejus unius vita omnium sit disciplina*.<sup>1</sup>

3. *Her power of intercession.* The saints, united to our Lord in glory, enjoy this power. Can it be denied his Mother? As her glory is greater than that of the saints, so does she surpass them in her intercessory power. We find proof in the authority of holy Doctors, in the fact that the Church in all her needs calls upon the help of the Blessed Virgin, in the countless

<sup>1</sup>*De Virgin.* II.

authentic instances of protection due to her intercession.

There is also a tradition that our Blessed Mother infallibly obtains from her divine Son everything she asks. Hence, her title of all-powerful suppliant.

St. Augustine, St. Bernard, St. Bonaventure and a great number of spiritual writers teach that the Blessed Virgin is the universal channel of grace, the dispensatrix of God's gifts. This seems to follow from her part in the work of our redemption. Is not this doctrine well calculated to inspire us with a boundless confidence in the Blessed Virgin? We may well address her with the words of holy Church: *Salve....vita, dulcedo, spes nostra.*

### ACTS AND RESOLUTIONS

Immaculate Virgin, Mother of God, in my early childhood I learned to know thee, to love thee, to bless thee. To thee I owe more graces than I am aware of. Protected, sustained, directed by thee, I have been able to overcome all obstacles and am now on the road to the holy priesthood, the fulfillment of my holiest aspirations.

With a heart full of gratitude, I wish to con-

secrete myself more and more to thee and again to profess that I belong to thee. It is with confidence in thy help, I will exercise my zeal in God's priesthood. Thou wilt obtain from thy divine Son all the graces I will need to preserve intact the grace of my priesthood and to communicate it to the souls that may be entrusted to me.

I resolve:

1. To celebrate all the feasts of the Blessed Virgin as piously as possible;
2. To have recourse to her in all temptations and trials.

*Dignare me laudare te, Virgo sacrata; da mihi virtutem contra hostes tuos.*

## II

### DEVOTION TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN

#### B. ITS HISTORY

##### SUMMARY

I. We will adore our Lord moving the Church to bestow extraordinary honors upon his blessed Mother. We will thank him for having given us this source of comfort and strength.

II. We will consider the development of the devotion to the Blessed Virgin.

1. *The dogmatic development*, appearing in the definitions of the Church about the Blessed Virgin.

2. *The liturgical development*. Feasts established in her honor.

3. *The popular development*. The countless practices of devotion due to the piety of the faithful towards the Mother of God.

III. We will ask ourselves whether we have been faithful in our devotion to the Blessed Virgin.

We will resolve:

1. To celebrate all her feasts as piously as possible;

2. To have recourse to her in all temptations and trials.

*Dignare me laudare te, Virgo sacrata; da mihi virtutem contra hostes tuos.*



## ADORATION

Let us adore our Lord moving the Church to bestow extraordinary honors upon his blessed Mother. All the devotions approved and blessed by the Church are due to his inspiration. We should, therefore, recognize him as the author of that development which has taken place among Christian peoples in their devotion to the Blessed Virgin. He willed that his Mother be honored on earth as she is in heaven. Hence, he has revealed to the Church the greatness and eminent holiness of our immaculate Mother. It is he who has implanted in the hearts of the faithful their boundless and confiding love for her.

What a joyous and consoling aspect of our holy religion is presented by the devotion to the Blessed Virgin! Let us thank our Lord for having given us this source of comfort and strength to sustain us in our trials and temptations.

## CONSIDERATIONS

Let us consider the development of the devotion to the Blessed Virgin. In the beginning, devotion to the Blessed Virgin held only an insignificant place in the practice of the

Church. In the *Magnificat*, Mary had foretold that all generations would call her blessed. This prophecy has been fulfilled. Age after age, the name of Mary has been surrounded with ever increasing glory.

1. *The dogmatic development.* On three occasions the Church passed solemn judgment on the prerogatives of the Blessed Virgin.

A celebrated heresiarch, Nestorius, denying the hypostatic union of Christ's humanity and the Word, suppressed personal unity in our Lord. Hence, Mary might not truly be called the Mother of God. The Council of Ephesus anathematized this error so destructive of the mystery of the Incarnation. It defined that we must recognize and adore one single person in Jesus Christ and that, consequently, Mary is truly the Mother of God. This proclamation of her divine maternity was received by the faithful of Ephesus with the greatest joy; the city was illuminated and the Fathers of the Council became the object of an enthusiastic ovation.

The second occasion referred to the Blessed Virgin's perpetual virginity. This prerogative of Mary, contested by some heretics, was made a dogma of the Church by two Councils, first

at Chalcedon, then more explicitly at Constantinople. These Councils declared that the Mother of the Savior, both before and after her miraculous conception of Christ, ever remained a virgin. This is why the Church gives her the title of *Virgo perpetua*.

There was another privilege of the Blessed Virgin about which the Church for a long time hesitated to pronounce her final decision—the immaculate conception. Although this was the object of universal faith, yet it was reserved for our times to see this new flower added to Mary's crown. In 1854 Pius IX, by his bull *Ineffabilis*, defined this dogma. On this occasion, there was manifested throughout the Church an enthusiasm like to that at Ephesus fourteen centuries before, when Mary's divine maternity was defined.

2. *The liturgical development.* This is evident in the liturgy of the mass and in various parts of the divine office. But we see it particularly in the institution of the feasts that have grown from age to age in honor of the Mother of God. They constitute a continual invitation for the faithful to honor the Blessed Virgin.

Some of these feasts were established to

glorify the person of Mary, her incomparable holiness, the treasures of grace with which God enriched her on earth and the glory with which he crowns her in heaven. Such are the feasts of the Immaculate Conception, the Blessed Virgin's Nativity, her Presentation in the Temple, her Holy Name, etc.

Another series relates to her divine maternity. In this category we find the Annunciation, the Visitation, the Purification, the Compassion.

Finally, the relations of the Blessed Virgin with the Church have given rise to a third class of feasts. Such are those of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Our Lady of Mercy, Our Lady of the Rosary, Our Lady Help of Christians.

3. *The popular development.* Who can enumerate the places and objects consecrated to the Blessed Virgin: churches, chapels, altars, shrines? There is no country in the Catholic world in which there are not pilgrimages to her shrines. France holds a place of honor in this exercise of devotion to Mary.

Countless are the sodalities and associations bearing her name and religious communities that have chosen her for their patron. And what name is more often given at baptism?

The piety of the faithful has suggested a great variety of ways in which to honor the Blessed Virgin. Let it suffice for us to recall the rosary, the angelus, the scapular, the month of Mary, and the number of special prayers.

Now, all this accords well with the tradition of the Church. Witness the testimony of the Fathers and holy Doctors: St. Cyprian, St. Ambrose, St. Gregory the Great, St. Anselm, St. Bernard, St. Bonaventure. Theologians have been happy to demonstrate the solidity of these devotions. Sacred orators and spiritual writers have made devotion to the Blessed Virgin the theme of their most eloquent exhortations. Thus has been verified the prophecy of the Magnificat: *Beatam me dicen omnes generationes.*

### ACTS AND RESOLUTIONS

My Lord and Savior, thou hast inspired these honors paid to thy Blessed Mother. Thou dost wish her to be praised and glorified on earth as she is in heaven. Thou hast made it clear how much thou art pleased with the homage she receives.

But have I for the mother of Christ a deep respect, a tender love, a boundless confidence?

Do I practice some little devotion every day in her honor?

Most Blessed Virgin, Mother of God, if in the past I have not been fervent in my devotion to thee, obtain from thy divine Son the graces I need to make me more faithful in the future. May I be a true son to thee; may I merit thy protection during life and thy blessing at the hour of my death.

I resolve:

1. To celebrate all her feasts as piously as possible;
2. To have recourse to her in all temptations and trials.

*Dignare me laudare te, Virgo sacrata; da mihi virtutem contra hostes tuos.*

### III

## THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

#### SUMMARY

- I. We will honor the Blessed Virgin in her Immaculate Conception. We will recall the figures which the Church applies to her.
- II. In the mystery of the Immaculate Conception we will consider three phases.

1. *Its announcement.* Like the mysteries of our Lord's life, this, too, was announced. God foretold it in the garden of Eden. Later on it was announced by figures and types.

2. *Its fulfillment.* God prepared an immaculate mother for the Savior. This prerogative included freedom from all stain, the fulness of supernatural gifts, and exemption from concupiscence.

3. *Its manifestation.* God revealed this mystery to his Church in a veiled manner and even permitted it to be contested. In our own times it was defined in response to the earnest wish of the whole Church.

- III. We will see that we ought to have a special devotion to this mystery and that the purity of Mary is the ideal exacted by our lofty vocation.

We will resolve:

1. Every day to practice some devotion to the mystery of the Immaculate Conception.

2. To recommend ourselves to the protection of Mary's intercession, especially when we are tempted.

3. To preserve our purity of heart, especially avoiding deliberate faults.

*Queen conceived without original sin, pray for us.*

### ADORATION

The first mystery in the life of the Blessed Virgin is her immaculate conception. And this feast begins the series of solemnities which holy Church has established to glorify the august mother of God on earth as the saints glorify her in heaven. This mystery, which was always cherished by Christian piety, became even more so after the definition of the Roman Pontiff made it an article of our faith. It is no less dear to the Blessed Virgin herself since, being the mystery of her purity, it may be considered the foundation of all her privileges.

Let us recall the figures in the Cantic of Canticles which the Church applies to her. *As the lily among thorns,<sup>1</sup> the well of living waters;<sup>2</sup> fair as the moon,<sup>3</sup> bright as the sun;<sup>4</sup> as the morning rising;<sup>5</sup> all fair.<sup>6</sup>* And in the book of Judith: *thou art the glory of Jerusalem,*



*thou art the joy of Israel, thou art the honor of our people.*<sup>1</sup>

Until then the earth had labored under the divine malediction pronounced after Adam's fall: *Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth.*<sup>2</sup> Let us bless God's infinite mercy. Amidst these thorns, a spotless lily has appeared. Let us adore and thank God, the author of this wonder.

### CONSIDERATIONS

In the mystery of the Immaculate Conception we may consider three phases, forming, so to speak, its history: its announcement, its fulfillment, and its manifestation.

1. *Its announcement.* Before sending the Messiah to the world, God willed that he be announced. The ages preceding his coming were full of predictions of the mysteries that were to be fulfilled in him and by him. The same was true of Mary immaculate.

Even as God was casting Adam out of the earthly paradise, he announced that of his race would be born a woman who would crush the head of the serpent: *She shall crush thy head.*<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> JUDITH 15<sup>10</sup>

<sup>2</sup> GEN. 3<sup>18</sup>

<sup>3</sup> GEN. 3<sup>15</sup>

The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception was in germ among the most ancient traditions that God confided to the human race. At first, like most of the early beliefs, it was expressed rather by emblems than by precise formulas. We find echoes of it in the figures and oracles of the Jewish people. The Fathers of the Church and Biblical interpreters have seen the announcement of this mystery in the ark which the deluge could not sink; in the spotless dove that brought the olive branch to Noe, showing that God's anger was appeased; in the rainbow that assures against a second deluge; in the door closed to all others but the God of Israel. They have seen it in the praise bestowed upon wisdom by the author of Proverbs, and in the inspired accents of the divine canticles. *Tota pulchra es, et macula non est in te.*

Even paganism was aware of the tradition that a pure virgin was to bring forth the promised Messias.

2. *Its fulfillment.* God prepares a worthy mother for the Savior, a mother who was not for a single moment subjected to the empire of Satan. Mary was immaculate in her conception as in all the rest of her life.

We may consider three principal elements in the nature of original sin. In the first place it is a stain, that is a state of disorder by which our faculties are turned away from the supernatural end for which we were destined, so that we are born, according to Saint Paul's expression, *fili i irae*.<sup>1</sup> It entails also a loss and impoverishment; for the soul is deprived of the divine gifts that were to have enriched it. Lastly, it kindles in our soul that concupiscence from which all evil passions spring.

But the Blessed Virgin was miraculously preserved from this threefold evil. The stain of sin which had until then marked all the children of Adam at the very first moment of life, does not soil her immaculate soul.

Nor is she deprived of those supernatural gifts which are withheld from us because of original sin. On the contrary, she was enriched with treasures of grace that gave her soul incomparable beauty. Their abundance, surpassing the graces of any other creature except the soul of Christ, was testified by the salutation of the archangel Gabriel: *Ave, gratia plena*.<sup>2</sup>

Nor does the Blessed Virgin experience those

<sup>1</sup> EPHES. 2<sup>a</sup>

<sup>2</sup> LUKE 1<sup>28</sup>

internal strifes that take place in our souls, the law of the members that so grievously tormented Saint Paul: the miserable offspring of original sin, which not even baptism removes. But her holy soul was freed from the temptations that solicit us to evil and from the importunate thoughts that distract us in prayer and from all those disturbances that upset our peace. In her soul all is calm and serene. Let us thank God for having imparted so abundantly the fruits of Redemption to our Blessed Mother.

3. *Its manifestation.* God confided the secret of this mystery to his Church, which guarded it faithfully till the day when it came to be solemnly defined.

For a long time this truth, like so many other articles of Catholic tradition, remained, as it were, covered by a veil. God even permitted it to be doubted and contested, without interference of the Church's authority. In the writings of the Fathers and other ecclesiastical authors, numerous testimonials had already established a strong presumption in favor of this dogma. Soon the mind of the Church was indirectly but clearly shown by the establishment of a feast in honor of the

Blessed Virgin's conception. Belief in the Immaculate Conception spread and became universal.

The Roman Pontiffs favored this belief in various ways, even authorizing an office and a feast of the Conception of the B. Virgin. At last, in response to the earnest wish of the entire Church, Pius IX, surrounded by a numerous assembly of cardinals and bishops, promulgated the bull *Ineffabilis* which defines: "That the doctrine according to which the Blessed Virgin Mary, by a singular grace and privilege granted to her by God Almighty, through the merits of Jesus Christ, the Savior of mankind, was preserved from all stain of original sin in the first instant of her conception, is revealed of God and must be firmly and constantly believed by all the faithful."

### ACTS AND RESOLUTIONS

The first practical conclusion suggested by these considerations is that I should have a special devotion for this mystery. The nature of the mystery itself with the glory it proclaims for the Blessed Virgin together with the great devotion manifested towards it by the faithful

should lead me to regard it as an abundant source of grace.

I should also try to share in this mystery by vigilantly keeping from my heart whatever might diminish its purity.

Mary's great privilege is due to the fact that she was destined by God to be the mother of the Redeemer. But the priestly functions that I am called to exercise have striking analogies with the divine maternity of Mary. The purity of Mary is the ideal exacted by this lofty dignity.

Mary immaculate, grant me a share in the graces thou dost dispense. By imitating thy purity, may I become worthy of my sublime vocation. May I ascend the altar of God with innocent hands and a pure heart.

I resolve

1. Every day to practice some devotion to the mystery of the Immaculate Conception;
2. To recommend myself to the protection of Mary's intercession especially when I am tempted;
3. To preserve my purity of heart, especially avoiding deliberate faults.

*Queen conceived without original sin, pray for us.*

## IV

### THE NATIVITY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN

#### SUMMARY

- I. We will adore the holy Trinity in whose sight the Blessed Virgin was sinless at her birth. We will praise the Lord who wrought such wonders in her.
- II. We will consider that her birth announces and inaugurates

1. *The life of the Blessed Virgin.* We know the virtues and the unique privileges of that life. But they were only the expansion of the treasures of holiness that she possessed when she came into this world.

2. *The life of her divine Son.* The dawn announces the rising of the sun. Mary's birth announces the coming of Christ. The Word of God chose this tabernacle for himself, a worthy abode. Hence this feast is one of joy in the Church.

3. *The life of the Church.* The nativity of Mary was the announcement and the first-fruits of the life of the Church, for it was the prelude of the reign of grace and inaugurated the reign of holiness.

- III. We will recall that our life in the seminary should forecast a holy and fruitful ministry. We will ask ourselves whether our conduct and dispositions give promise of this blessed future.

We will resolve:

1. To renew our love for the Blessed Virgin and our confidence in her intercession;

2. By the grace of this mystery, to cultivate a more Christian and priestly life in our souls.

*Who is she that cometh forth as the morning rising?*

### ADORATION

Let us adore the holy Trinity in whose sight the Blessed Virgin was sinless at her birth into this world. She was endowed with that supernatural beauty which grace confers on our souls. God the Father loves her as his spouse, God the Son takes her for his mother, God the Holy Ghost enriches her soul with all his gifts.

For a long time, Saint Joachim and Saint Ann had asked of God the blessing promised to the patriarchs; and heaven had seemed deaf to their prayers. What must have been their joy at the birth of this child, come to console their old age and to make, as it were, their home a heaven on earth?

With the words that Mary used later on to testify her gratefulness to God, let us praise the Lord who wrought such wonders in her:  
*He that is mighty hath done great things to me.*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> LUKE 1<sup>49</sup>



## CONSIDERATIONS

Let us consider the birth of Mary as announcing and inaugurating the holy life of this blessed virgin, the adorable life of her divine Son, and the life of the Church, which is the mysterious extension of the life of Christ.

1. *It announces and inaugurates the life of the Blessed Virgin.* We have often meditated on various details of that life. The words that she uttered and that have been preserved for us, enable us to contemplate the beauty of her soul. We admire that life as the masterpiece of God's creation, a miracle of purity and holiness, the loftiest practice of the Christian virtues, in a word such perfection as was suitable to the mother of the incarnate Word.

But this supernatural beauty was only the expansion and manifestation of the treasures of grace and holiness that she possessed when she came into this world. Thus endowed with the rich gifts of the Holy Ghost, she offers herself to God and follows the inspirations of his grace. Her whole life was the realization of this holy offering.

Her nativity was, therefore, the prelude and the announcement of the other mysteries of her life. It contained them all as the seed contains

the plant, or as the source contains the stream that flows from it. We can already admire the purity, humility, patience, obedience, and spirit of sacrifice which she practised so perfectly all during her life.

2. *It announces and inaugurates the life of her divine Son.* The whole history of the world had been a preparation and announcement of his coming. Mary was the last of these preparations and the holiest of these announcements.

As a king about to visit one of his provinces prepares in advance a fitting abode for himself there, so the Word of God chose this tabernacle for himself, sanctified and adorned it. This is why Mary the Blessed Virgin, from the first moment of her life, was preserved from sin and enriched with abundant graces. Her birth may be called the dawn of the blessed day of our redemption. To-day the Church says in her office: *Nativitas tua, Dei genitrix Virgo, gaudium annuntiavit universo mundo. Ex te enim ortus est sol justitiae, Christus Deus noster.*<sup>1</sup>

The king of glory has not yet come, but his palace is ready to receive him. This feast is

<sup>1</sup> *Ant. ad Magnificat*

one of joy in the Church. *Lift up your heads, because your redemption is at hand.*<sup>1</sup>

3. *It announces and inaugurates the life of the Church*, in which our Savior is revealed to us. It is holiness under every form and in every situation, raised to the highest degree of perfection that man can attain.

But the nativity of the Blessed Virgin was the announcement and the first-fruits of this life in which we are called to take part.

It was its *announcement*. The life of the Church is the reign of grace. All the saints, all Christians who live according to the law of Christ, can repeat Saint Paul's words: *By the grace of God, I am what I am.*<sup>2</sup> Christ, by his death, founded this regin; the Blessed Virgin, coming into the world, announces its approach. God, who will give us his Son through her, will likewise through her give us all the spiritual graces that are needed to lead us to heaven. Saint Bernard has said: *God placed in Mary the plenitude of all goodness, so that whatever hope we have, whatever grace, whatever salvation, we know flows from her; for this is the will of God who wishes us to receive everything through Mary.*<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> LUKE 21<sup>28</sup>

<sup>2</sup> COR. 15<sup>10</sup>

<sup>3</sup> *Serm. de Nativ.*

Her birth was also the *first-fruits* of the life of the Church. It not only announced the reign of grace, but inaugurated it. The holiness of her soul is the fruit of grace, that gift of God which will continue to sanctify the souls of men until the end of time. By anticipation she is formed according to the model of the incarnate Word who will be her Son. Next to him, she is the type of perfection which the elect of God will try to imitate.

### ACTS AND RESOLUTIONS

Like the nativity of the Blessed Virgin, our life in the seminary should be the dawn of a bright day. For the Church, it ought to be the consoling announcement of a priestly life of eminent holiness as well as the presage of a fruitful and blessed ministry.

Has my life in the seminary clearly given this promise for the future? If my superiors, my fellow-students, my parents, friends, and members of my parish believe that I will be a good priest, is not their opinion founded solely on appearances? Is it not true that only my best side is visible to them? But when I seriously question my own heart, is there not rea-

son to fear for the future, if I do not alter and improve my present dispositions?

Often have I been warned, yet scarcely often enough, that my life as a priest will be simply the manifestation of what my seminary life contained in germ. I wish to be not merely a good priest, but a holy priest, for I am convinced that the Church needs holy priests.

Blessed Mother of God, towards that purpose I will direct all my efforts, aided by the grace which thou will obtain for me from thy divine Son. I will imitate the virtues of thy infancy, especially thy perfect readiness to conform in all things to the designs of God.

I resolve:

1. To renew my love for the Blessed Virgin and my confidence in her intercession;

2. By the grace of this mystery, to cultivate a more Christian and priestly life in my soul.

*Who is she that cometh forth as the morning rising?*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> CANT. 6<sup>2</sup>

## V

### THE PRESENTATION

#### MARY'S CONSECRATION

##### SUMMARY

I. We will adore the Holy Spirit inspiring Mary to give herself to God. We will note the analogy between her presentation in the Temple and our life in the seminary.

II. We will consider three sanctuaries in which Mary's presentation took place.

1. *The sanctuary of her heart.* Mary's heart heard the word of the Most High. It obeyed, despite the sacrifice.

2. *The sanctuary of her family.* Only the angels witnessed the scene when she made her resolve known to her parents. But without hesitation they give her to God.

3. *The sanctuary of the Temple.* The desire of her heart is fulfilled. Thanksgiving to God and conformity to his will are the habitual dispositions of her soul.

III. We will recall that the history of our vocation resembles that of Mary's. We will ask ourselves whether we have been constant and faithful in fulfilling the promises of our tonsure.

We will resolve, often to repeat the words of our clerical consecration.

*Dux est Virgo sacerdos;  
Fas sit quo properat sequi.*

### ADORATION

As tradition tells us, Mary at the age of three years was presented in the Temple by her pious parents that she might pass the years of her childhood and young maidenhood under the eyes of God in that holy abode. This mystery was the first public act in the life of the Blessed Virgin, the first manifestation of the graces with which God had endowed her.

This feast has a special interest for us since to-day we are invited to renew the promises of our tonsure. Is there not a striking analogy between Mary presenting herself in the Temple to consecrate herself to God, and the young cleric quitting the world for the sanctuary, exchanging the livery of the world for the holy garments with which the Church clothes her ministers and declaring that henceforth God will be his only portion?

Let us adore the Holy Spirit dwelling in Mary and inspiring her generous resolution of giving herself to God. Let us thank him for giving us this perfect model of sacrifice, the complete self-sacrifice which he asks of us.

## CONSIDERATIONS

We may consider three sanctuaries in which the mystery of Mary's presentation took place: the sanctuary of her heart where it was conceived, the family sanctuary in which it was resolved upon, and the sanctuary of the Temple in which it was consummated.

1. *The sanctuary of her heart.* We know with what care the Holy Ghost had adorned and embellished it, with what solicitude he had preserved it from evil, how abundantly he had enriched it with heavenly gifts.

*Hearken O daughter, and see, and incline thy ear:*

*And forget thy people and thy father's house.*

*And the king shall greatly desire thy beauty.<sup>1</sup>*

Mary has heard these words of God, and nothing can keep her from following them.

But it is no easy sacrifice that is asked of her. She has barely entered upon life. At so tender an age, how can she think of separating from these parents whom she loves and for whom her presence is a great consolation? Does she not need their care and kindness? Will they not give her an example of lofty holiness?

<sup>1</sup> Ps. 44<sup>11</sup>



But when God speaks, it is necessary to obey. The house in which Mary was born is a holy house. But in a still holier house must she prepare for the accomplishment of God's designs. She knows not what future awaits her; she only knows that God, who accorded her such extraordinary privileges, reserves her entirely for himself. In perfect obedience to the divine will, from the depth of her heart she renounces all created things. She offers herself to her Creator as a victim ready to undergo immolation and wishing to live only for him.

2. *The sanctuary of her family.* Although she belonged to God, she belonged also to her family. As an obedient child she had to make her resolution known to Saint Joachim and Saint Ann, ask their consent and coöperation.

Only the angels witnessed what took place in this holy family on this occasion. It was probably in one of those conversations which they had together, talking of God and his holy law, that the Blessed Virgin let them know the secret of her heart.

We can imagine what a joy and comfort she was to her parents, this child whom God had given them in answer to their earnest prayers.

With what joy and increasing affection, they saw her gifts of nature and grace becoming manifest? And what grief they must have felt at the prospects of this separation?

Their deliberation, however, was neither long nor contentious. Once the will of God was clearly known, they could no longer think of resistance. Humbly, they confessed that it was just for them to return to God what he had confided to them.

The history of God's chosen people offered illustrious examples of children offered to God in the Temple by their parents. Samuel, the great prophet, had passed his youth in this holy place and pious Israelites still entrusted their children to the priests that they might be brought up by them in the fear of the Lord. The piety of Mary's parents led them to imitate these examples.

3. *The sanctuary of the Temple.* Accompanied by her parents, Mary goes to Jerusalem and presents herself at the Temple. The gates of the house of God close behind her; the desire of her heart is accomplished; she has given herself to God and God has given himself to her. Who will describe her fervent generosity, the holy joy she felt at thinking

that, henceforth, the Temple would be her abode where, far from the world and its vanities, under the eyes of God, she might freely devote herself to exercises of piety?

Her first feeling was no doubt one of thanksgiving to God for his blessings. She is humble; but she can not fail to understand that she has been the object of divine predilection. If God has done so much for her, it is evident that he has some special designs in her regard. She does not know what they are. What immolation will God ask of her? She can not foresee. She knows that she no longer belongs to herself and she puts herself at the disposal of God's holy will

Meanwhile, she performs the duties of the hour, regarding them as the expression of the divine will. Her day is divided between prayer, work, and charitable deeds. In every detail she is a perfect model of obedience.

There it was, according to the common tradition, that Mary made her vow of virginity. Up to that time, this vow was unknown in Israel. But henceforth there were to be many happy to follow the example of the Queen of Virgins.

## ACTS AND RESOLUTIONS

In the history of my vocation, I find many circumstances analogous to those on which I have just meditated. Can I forget the blessed moment when the same voice which called Mary to the Temple made itself heard in the depth of my heart; when I first felt this attraction for the priesthood; when the sanctuary appeared to me as my goal? God called me. But were there not obstacles to overcome? Would my family favor my desire? Would there not be great sacrifices necessary in order to make it possible? My God, thou hast removed all obstacles; thou hast led me to the doors of this sanctuary, the object of my aspirations.

Like Mary, I, too, have left the world and consecrated myself to the Lord. But she offered herself a spotless victim to God; her generosity was without reserve or restriction; she remained faithful to her promises. Has my life been a constant and faithful fulfillment of the promise of my tonsure?

In the grace of the holy mystery of thy presentation, to-day I will renew my clerical promises. May this be at the same time a reparation for my shortcomings and a re-

newal of my determination to belong irrevocably and solely to God.

I resolve often to repeat the words of my clerical consecration.

*Dux est Virgo sacerdos;*

*Fas sit quo propera sequi.*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Hymn. Praesent.*

## VI

### THE PRESENTATION

#### MARY'S LIFE IN THE TEMPLE

##### SUMMARY

- I. We will adore God manifesting towards us the same order of Providence as towards the Blessed Virgin, leading us from the world to the retirement of the seminary. We will thank our Lord for these marks of his favor.
- II. We will consider three advantages that the Temple offers to Mary and the seminary to us.
1. *A sacred abode.* The Temple was the holiest place in the world. The seminary is God's dwelling place and here he makes his presence felt.
  2. *A chosen society.* In the Temple Mary was among God's chosen friends. Our Lord himself is the very soul of our family life in the seminary.
  3. *Exercises of piety,* by which Mary sanctified her days in the Temple. Like hers, our life is passed in the midst of the most sanctifying exercises.
- III. We will recall that our life here is a preparation for a sublime vocation. We will ask the Blessed Virgin to obtain for us the light and strength to coöperate with the grace of our vocation.
- We will resolve:

1. To faithfully profit by all the means of sanctification at our disposal.

2. Often to think of the priesthood and the great duties it will impose on us.

*In habitatione sancta, coram ipso, ministravi.*

### ADORATION

Let us adore God who has destined us to a vocation analogous to that of the Blessed Virgin, manifesting the same order of Providence towards us as towards her. By the priesthood, he wishes to associate us too in the work of redemption which the incarnate Word accomplished on earth. This is why he separates us from the exterior world, an environment in which our virtue would be too much exposed. He wishes the seminary to be for us what the retirement of the Temple was for the Blessed Virgin, an asylum of peace, a sanctifying abode.

Here, he has established the conditions favorable to our priestly perfection. Here, he bestows his light and other abundant graces. In this blessed retreat, according to the words of a spiritual writer, “the air is purer, the heaven is more open, and God is nearer, *Aer purior, cælum apertius, familiarior Deus.*”

Let us appreciate these advantages which we enjoy without, perhaps, taking notice of them.

Let us thank our Lord for these marks of his favor. *Non fecit taliter omni nationi.*<sup>1</sup>

### CONSIDERATIONS

The retirement of the Temple which Mary chose for her abode after her consecration to God, offered three precious advantages to her: a sacred abode which God filled with his majesty; a chosen society wherein she would find faith and charity and edifying example; exercises of piety that were so many channels of God's grace. We enjoy these same advantages in the seminary.

1. *A sacred abode.* It was the most august and holiest place in the world. For it was the centre of the Jewish religion, the symbol of God's presence in the midst of his people, the pledge of his promised protection, and the divine memorial of all his blessings.

The wisest and most illustrious of Israel's kings had constructed it; God had declared: *Ut sit nomen meum ibi in sempiternum.*<sup>2</sup> There was heard the inspired voice of the prophets. And for centuries, the tribes of Israel had come there to adore the God of their fathers and offer

<sup>1</sup> PS. 146<sup>20</sup>

<sup>2</sup> II PAR. 7<sup>16</sup>



him sacrifice. *For thither did the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord: the testimony of Israel, to praise the name of the Lord.*<sup>1</sup>

The seminary is likewise a venerable and sacred abode, recalling holy and precious memories. These walls, consecrated by prayer and silent meditation, speak eloquently to our hearts. God dwells here and makes his presence felt. What I see and what I hear turn my mind constantly to him. How many holy priests have gone forth from here to labor in the Lord's vineyard! How many have here been inspired with a truly apostolic spirit and zeal!

2. *A chosen society.* Upon entering the Temple, Mary was received with loving kindness; she dwelt there in the midst of peace and charity. She found herself among God's chosen friends. These were the sacerdotal and Levitical families, engaged in the service of the holy place and in performing the ceremonies of the Jewish worship. In them, Mary found guides and devoted teachers who took the place of the pious parents whom she had left in order to follow God's call.

There were also companions, pure like her-

<sup>1</sup> Ps. 121<sup>4</sup>

self, who had been presented to the Lord and were being brought up in the shadow of the holy tabernacles. While she edified this company by her speech and example, she also derived joy and encouragement from this association.

Our Lord himself is the very soul of this new family in which we find ourselves here in the seminary. Here, I receive the charity and guidance of his representatives. And my brother seminarians are the chosen ones of good Christian families; the hope of the Church, the joy and consolation of the bishop whose thoughtful care is ever occupied with our welfare.

What a blessing it is for us to advance together toward the priesthood, the object of our heart's desire, mutually encouraging one another by counsel and example, realizing the words of the psalmist: *Ecce quam bonum et quam jucundum habitare fratres in unum.*<sup>1</sup>

3. *Exercises of piety* by which Mary sanctified her days in the Temple, growing more and more united to God. She was fervently devoted to prayer and meditation, read and studied the holy Books; she assisted at the religious ceremonies joined in the sacred songs,

<sup>1</sup> Ps. 132<sup>1</sup>

and fulfilled various functions in the offering of the sacrifices.

What nourished Mary's piety in the Temple, we find also in the seminary. Like hers, our life is passed in the midst of the most sanctifying exercises. Meditation, spiritual reading, especially that of the Sacred Scriptures, the sacred ceremonies, spiritual conferences, fill our life here as they did that of the Blessed Virgin in the Temple. The sacrifices at which she assisted were only figurative, whereas it is our privilege to assist daily at the true sacrifice in which the incarnate Word is immolated and given us as food for our souls.

How much, therefore, I should love the seminary whither divine Providence has led me and where he has surrounded me with such precious advantages! How faithfully I should imitate the perfect example of holiness offered me by Mary's life in the Temple!

### ACTS AND RESOLUTIONS

When Mary was presented in the Temple she did not completely understand the vocation to which God called her. She did not know that the Word of God would one day become incarnate in her womb. She was not

aware that her immaculate conception, the gifts by which God enriched her soul, and her life in the Temple were divinely planned to prepare her for the great part she was to have in man's redemption.

The cloud that hid the future from Mary's knowledge does not exist in my case. For a long time, I have known the designs of God in my regard. I know what rank I am to occupy in the Church and what august ministry will be entrusted to me. How can I be negligent in preparing for such a vocation?

Mary, queen and model of seminarians, obtain for me the grace to understand the gift of God and to coöperate with it even as thou didst. May I belong unreservedly to God, and, by constant fidelity here in my life of preparation in the seminary, may I become a true, worthy priest of Jesus Christ, thy son.

I resolve:

1. To faithfully profit by all the means of sanctification at my disposal;
2. Often to think of the priesthood and the great duties it will impose on me.

*In habitatione sancta, coram ipso, ministravi.*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> ECCLUS. 24<sup>14</sup>

## VII

### THE ANNUNCIATION

#### SUMMARY

I. We will recall that the mystery of the Annunciation was begun in heaven, continued and consummated at Nazareth. Having joined in the angelic salutation, we will adore the divine Word incarnate in Mary's womb.

II. We will consider the archangel's words, *Ecce concipies . . . et paries filium, et vocabis nomen ejus Jesum*, as summing up our life of seminarian and priest.

1. *Concipies*. A spiritual conception of Jesus should take place within us: in our intellect by the study of his person and teaching; in our heart by the perfection of holy love; in our will by conformity to our sublime model.

2. *Paries filium*. Mary fulfilled this announcement corporally and spiritually. We, too, will cause the incarnate Word to be present. We, too, will make his grace be born in the souls of men.

III. Mary is *Virgo sacerdos*. We will try to imitate her preparation for her glorious mission. We will ask her to obtain for us a great love for Christ and souls.

We will resolve:

1. To thank God often for our vocation;

2. To cultivate an earnest desire to extend the reign of Christ in the souls of men.

*Ecce concipies . . . et paries filium, et vocabis nomen ejus Jesum.*

### ADORATION

In the spirit of faith, let us call to mind the mystery of the Annunciation in the three principal moments of its accomplishment. It began in heaven when God, having decreed the incarnation of the Word, entrusted to the archangel Gabriel the mission of bringing the good news to earth. It is continued at Nazareth where the Blessed Virgin, who had recently left the Temple and was united in holy marriage to Saint Joseph, was praying. There the archangel greeted her in the marvelous words reported by Saint Luke. It is finally consummated in the womb of the Blessed Virgin when the Word of God descends and is made a man for our salvation.

Let us join in the archangel's respectful words of salutation: *Ave, gratia plena*. And let us admire the interior dispositions of Mary's soul: that virginity which she had vowed to the Lord; that profound humility which made her proclaim herself unworthy of these

heavenly favors; that obedience, ever ready to conform perfectly to the designs of Providence; that religious spirit which made her heart a sanctuary wherein God was more honored than he had been until then anywhere on earth.

Let us adore in union with Mary the divine Word incarnate in her womb. And, since he already offers himself to God as a victim for sin, humbling himself before the divine majesty and interceding for sinners, let us unite in those acts of adoration, expiation, and thanksgiving.

### CONSIDERATIONS

There has also been an annunciation in my life. It occurred when God made known to me, through the voice of my confessor, that I was called to the incomparable honor of the priesthood. From that time, the aspirations of my soul and the efforts of my will have been directed towards that great purpose. The archangel announced to Mary: *Ecce concipies . . . et paries filium, et vocabis nomen ejus Jesum.*<sup>1</sup> These words, which sum up the sublime mission of the Blessed Virgin, express also what should be my life as seminarian and priest.

<sup>1</sup> LUKE 1<sup>31</sup>

1. *Concipies.* The evangelist tells us how this word became efficacious. No sooner had she given her consent, than, by the mysterious action of the Holy Spirit, the Word of God assumed his human nature in her. Mary was thus elevated to the dignity of Mother of God. Jesus dwells within her, mingling his life, so to speak, with hers, enlightening her mind, influencing all her faculties.

It is a miracle of this sort which should take place in my soul during my seminary life. By virtue of a mysterious conception, of which the Holy Ghost is the author, the life of Jesus, the great high priest, should take the place of my life, or rather it should mingle itself with mine, elevate it, transform it, perform in me what Saint Paul felt in himself when he said that he no longer lived, but Christ lived in him. This is the priestly formation which the exercises of the seminary will accomplish in me, if I am faithful in performing them. It will be a spiritual conception of Jesus within me.

It will take place in my intellect by the attentive study and meditation of his adorable person, his mysteries, his interior and exterior life, his perfections, his claims to our love, his doctrine, and his moral teaching.



In my heart, it will be the perfection of holy love. I should govern my affections lest they go astray in attachment to creatures. Banishing all profane love from my heart, I should employ its power in loving Christ and what he loves, namely God, the Church, and immortal souls.

I should conceive Christ in my will by conforming all its acts to that sublime model of perfection and holiness, by becoming another Christ. I will have to act, not only like him, but in him and by him, renouncing my own will in order to follow all the inspirations of his Spirit; so that Christ becomes the soul of my soul, the motive power of my will. *Ecce concipies.*

2. *Paries filium.* Mary fulfilled this announcement in a double manner: corporally when she gave birth to the incarnate Word at Bethlehem; spiritually by the continued communication of his life to us. By virtue of her maternity, she has become the channel of this life for all Christians. The former we commemorate at Christmas; the second is the foundation of that confidence with which we address her to obtain God's grace through her. I should give birth to Christ in this double

manner. *Paries Filium, et vocabis nomen ejus Jesum.*

Availing myself of the most august of my prerogatives, I will ascend the altar and by my words the incarnate Word will become present under the appearances of bread and wine. After holding him aloft for the adoration of the faithful, I will give him to them as the food of their souls. Is this not Christmas again, a sort of new birth of the Savior? *O veneranda sacerdotum dignitas, says a doctor of the Church, in quorum manibus, velut in utero Virginis, Filius Dei incarnatur.* And in the hymn for the feast of the Presentation, we say:

*De Virgine natus,  
Per nos saepe renasceris.*

Like Mary, we, too, will continue to cause Christ to be born in the souls of men by imparting grace to them. In all the acts of his ministry, the priest is constantly giving Christ. In the pulpit, he feeds souls with the doctrine of Christ, in administering the sacraments, he gives his grace. Saint Paul said to the faithful of his time: *My little children, of whom I am in labor again, until Christ be formed in you.*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> GAL. 4:19

The Christian life is a continuation and extension of the incarnation; it is Christ who desires to live in all Christians so that every one of them might say with Saint Paul: *Vivit in me Christus*.<sup>2</sup> But this is accomplished by the ministry of priests; Christ has made them depositaries of his power.

### ACTS AND RESOLUTIONS

In how many ways Mary's vocation resembles that of the priest! She has justly been called *Virgo sacerdos*. Although not honored with the sacerdotal character, yet she fulfilled a mission analogous to that which our Lord confides to his priests. This point of view will help me to appreciate the greatness of the priesthood and to understand what purity, holiness, and perfection it requires. I will adore the source and perfect type of the priesthood in Christ, and I will honor in Mary the most beautiful model of the priesthood after him.

In my sacerdotal preparation, I will try to imitate Mary's preparation for her glorious mission. And when I shall be a priest, I will

<sup>2</sup> GAL. 2<sup>20</sup>

keep the thought of her ever in my mind in the exercise of my sacred duties. I will ask her to obtain for me a great love for Christ and a great love for souls.

I resolve:

1. To thank God often for my vocation;
2. To cultivate an earnest desire to extend the reign of Christ in the souls of men.

*Ecce concipies . . . et paries filium,  
et vocabis nomen ejus Jesum.*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> LUKE 1<sup>31</sup>

## VIII

### THE VISITATION

#### SUMMARY

I. We will recall the circumstances of this mystery. We will adore the Word Incarnate in Mary and will honor those holy persons who were present at the Visitation.

II. We will consider the Blessed Virgin visiting St. Elizabeth as the model for seminarians during their vacation.

1. *The dispositions she had on leaving her retreat.* She was not prompted by frivolous curiosity nor by a desire to leave her solitude. We should love and appreciate our retreat in the seminary and consider vacation as a time of trial and training.

2. *The holy influence that Mary exercised.* Her visit was apostolic. We are reasonably expected to be serious, pious, and edifying. Relaxation should not lead us to abandon our spiritual exercises nor to depart from the standard of clerical deportment.

3. *The treasure of holiness which Mary brought back with her on her return.* Our love for the seminary should increase during this sojourn in the midst of the world. At the end of vacation we should be no less fervent than at the beginning.

III. We will ask ourselves whether during vacation we have always acted as becomes a seminarian.

We will ask, through Mary's intercession, for the grace of spending our vacation better than we have done in the past.

We will resolve often to recall this mystery of the Visitation during our vacation.

*Sancta Maria, in Visitatione festina, ora pro nobis.*

### ADORATION

Let us recall the circumstances of the mystery which the Church invites us to honor in the feast of the Visitation. The Blessed Virgin had conceived the Word made flesh. The heavenly messenger of the Annunciation had also let her know that her cousin Elizabeth was going to see her prayer answered by the birth of a son in her old age: *Behold thy cousin Elizabeth, she also hath conceived a son in her old age; and this is the sixth month with her that is called barren.*<sup>1</sup> Filled with joy at this news, the Blessed Virgin set out for the home of Zachary and Elizabeth to congratulate her relative.

The Spirit of God had informed Elizabeth of the great miracle accomplished in Mary and the eminent dignity to which God had elevated

<sup>1</sup> LUKE 1<sup>36</sup>

her. The pious wife of Zachary, grateful for Mary's felicitations, proclaims her blessed among women. She is surprised that the mother of the Lord should deign to visit her. *And when Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary the infant leaped in her womb.*<sup>1</sup> Then, it was the Blessed Virgin who uttered the beautiful canticle which the Church is happy to repeat day after day until the end of time.

After adoring the Word of God incarnate in Mary, let us honor the holy souls who took part in the mystery of the Visitation and were witnesses of it. Let us repeat the words of Zachary: *Blessed be the Lord God of Israel: because he hath visited and wrought the redemption of his people.*<sup>2</sup>

### CONSIDERATIONS

Let us consider the Blessed Virgin visiting Saint Elizabeth as the model for seminarians to imitate during their vacation. She is our model in the dispositions which animated her when she left her retreat at Nazareth to visit Saint Elizabeth, by the sanctifying influence she exerted about her, and by the treasure of

<sup>1</sup> LUKE 1<sup>68</sup>

<sup>2</sup> LUKE 1<sup>41</sup>

holiness she brought back with her on her return.

1. *The dispositions she had on leaving her retreat.* Within her she possessed all the riches and joys of heaven. There was in her heart no craving for the world, its sights, and its vain gratifications. When she decided to leave her retreat, it was not out of frivolous curiosity, not from a desire to see and be seen, not because she found her solitude wearisome. But she was moved by a desire to perform a duty of charity. This she considered an exercise of zeal, an opportunity to glorify God. Moreover the Holy Ghost, who directed all her acts, made the will of God known to her. *She went into the hill country with haste.*<sup>1</sup>

A fervent seminarian, like Mary, loves his retreat, and appreciates its advantages. He does not find the rule and seminary exercises burdensome. The solitude of his room contains a certain charm for him; and the society of his brethren is pleasant and agreeable. There is no longing to exchange the calm and silence of this retreat for the noise and agitation of the world.

For him, vacation is a time of trial, intended

<sup>1</sup> LUKE 1<sup>39</sup>



to complete and strengthen the work of sacerdotal training begun in the seminary. But he has a salutary fear of its dangers since he is conscious of his own weakness.

2. *The holy influence that Mary exercised.* The visit to her cousin Elizabeth was not an ordinary act of charity; it was apostolic. As soon as she enters the pious home, she sanctifies the precursor by communicating to him the grace whose very source she possesses within her. In an inspired canticle, she exalts the Lord's mercies toward her. For the next three months, her words and acts were a heavenly example for the happy family which she was visiting. She departed only after taking part in the joy occasioned by the birth of John the Baptist.

This is the model that should guide us during vacation time. When we revisit our home, we are received with joyous affection and a certain feeling of respect because of the holy orders that have imprinted their sacred character upon us. We are reasonably expected to be serious, pious, and edifying in every respect. Let us have a care not to disappoint these hopes.

Our speech, too, should be a canticle of

praise, exalting God's mercy and showing how happy we are to belong to him. Let our acts confirm our words. Should we not continue the exercises of piety that sanctify our day in the seminary? The necessary relaxation of vacation is compatible with a reasonable amount of serious work. Our dealings with others ought to show that true piety is not austere, not unsociable, but, on the contrary, always amiable and kindly.

Such will be the conduct of a good, earnest seminarian. Everywhere, in church, at home, on the streets, he will give edification by the modesty of his bearing, his simple and unpretentious gravity, by a reserve that indicates the purity of his soul. Thus will his vacation be apostolic.

3. *The treasure of holiness which Mary brought back with her on her return.* After three months passed in the world, she joyfully resumed her life of silence and retreat. The treasure of recollection, purity, and interior life which she possessed before her journey, she brought back intact. While spreading grace about her, she lost none of this precious gift; rather, it increased in her.

Likewise for the seminarian after three

months of vacation in the world, the time comes for him to return to his retreat. The voice of the Lord, which had invited him to take the relaxation of vacation, now directs him to return. *Ecce ego, quia vocasti me.*<sup>1</sup> In fact, his love for the seminary has increased during this sojourn in the midst of the world. What he has there seen and heard has made him understand the advantages of the seminary and its spirit of solitude.

On leaving the seminary at the beginning of vacation, he was fervent. He is still so at his return. He had determined upon certain exercises of piety and rules of conduct for his vacation. Fidelity to them has saved him from many falls. Weekly confession, frequent communion and devotion to the Blessed Virgin were the sources of his strength. Thanks to these wise precautions, he passed his vacation without injury to his virtue.

### ACTS AND RESOLUTIONS

Have my vacations been of that sort? Have I followed the advice given me at the beginning of vacation? Have I considered

<sup>1</sup> I KINGS 3<sup>o</sup>

this period of relaxation from a Christian and priestly point of view? Did I always act in a manner becoming a seminarian? Is it not possible that my lack of gravity, my spirit of levity, my indiscrete curiosity may have caused surprise, disappointment, and even scandal? Has the end of vacation found me as fervent and devoted to God as I was on leaving the seminary?

O Mary, by the grace of the Visitation, obtain for me the grace of spending my vacation better than I have in the past. In my home, may I imitate thy piety at the home of Zachary. May I return to the seminary as pure and fervent and generous in God's service as I am now.

I resolve often to recall this mystery during the course of my vacation.

*Sancta Maria, in Visitatione festina, ora pro nobis.*

## IX

### THE PURIFICATION

#### SUMMARY

I. We will recall the double mystery celebrated to-morrow. We will offer our homage of respect to Simeon and Anna, the witnesses of this mystery.

II. The events of that day will suggest the thoughts of sacrifice.

1. *In the heart of Christ.* Sacrifice is the summary of his whole life. For him the ceremony of the Presentation was a real offering, to be consummated by the immolation on Calvary.

2. *The sacrifice in the heart of Mary.* She understood the import and extent of the offering. She foresaw the sufferings of her new-born Son and her own anguish. She accepted to drink the bitter chalice.

3. *The sacrifice in the heart of Simeon and Anna.* In his *Nunc dimittis* Simeon offers his life to God. The prophetess Anna had long before broken the bonds that attached her to the world.

III. We will reflect that, like Simeon and Anna, we are privileged to witness the adorable sacrifice. Soon we will fill the rôle of the Blessed Virgin. We will ask that the mystery of the Presentation may fill our souls with the spirit of sacrifice.

We will resolve:

1. To hear Mass more devoutly;

2. To imitate the sacrificial dispositions of Christ;

3. By purity of heart to prepare for the privilege of offering him at the altar.

*Sacrifice and oblation thou wouldst not . . . .*  
*Then said I: Behold I come.*

### ADORATION

Let us recall the circumstances of the mystery which the Church celebrates to-day. It was the fulfillment of a double law imposed by God upon the Jewish people. The first required that every first-born be offered to the Lord and redeemed by a victim immolated in its place. The second ordered the woman who had brought forth the male child to present herself in the Temple for the ceremony of her purification forty days after the child's birth.

Forty days had passed since the birth of Christ. Joseph and Mary, being faithful observers of the law, went to the Temple with the divine infant. They offered the prescribed sacrifices and the Blessed Virgin, allowing herself to be considered an ordinary woman, was purified like the others.

At the conclusion of this ceremony, Simeon, a saintly old man, came to the Temple, inspired by the Holy Ghost. God had promised him

that before leaving this world he would have the joy of seeing the Redeemer for whom all Israel was waiting. He recognized the Messiah in the child that Mary and Joseph presented to the Lord. With a transport of joy, he takes it in his arms and utters the beautiful *Nunc dimittis*, foretelling by the figure of a sword, that will pierce Mary's soul, the sufferings she will undergo because of this child.

The evangelist also mentions another witness of this mystery, Anna, the prophetess. *Who departed not from the temple, by fastings and prayers, serving night and day.*<sup>1</sup> In union with these two holy souls, let us offer our homage of respect, and love to Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.

### CONSIDERATIONS

The thought which the different circumstances of this mystery bring to our mind, is that of sacrifice: in the heart of Christ, who offers himself to God as a victim; in the heart of Mary and Joseph, who offer Christ and themselves along with him; in the heart of Simeon and Anna, who generously join in the offering of all three.

<sup>1</sup> LUKE 2<sup>37</sup>

1. *The sacrifice in the heart of Christ.* He is the centre of all the incidents of this mystery. On him, the eyes of all are turned and to him their words refer. He is proclaimed the principle of resurrection and ruin, the light of the nations, the salvation of God. Let us consider how, in his soul, he fulfills the great law of sacrifice.

Sacrifice is the summary of his whole life, the fundamental act to which all the rest refers. He is called *Agnus Dei*<sup>1</sup> that is the victim of God. Thus is he represented in the prophetic figures of the Old Law. His death on the cross was the immolation by which his sacrifice was to be consummated. But before the immolation he made the offering.

The great apostle, speaking of our Savior, says: *When he cometh into the world, he saith: Sacrifice and oblation thou wouldst not: but a body thou hast fitted to me. Holocausts for sin did not please thee. Then said I: behold I come.*<sup>2</sup> This offering of Christ was solemnly and outwardly expressed by the mystery of the Presentation.

There, where the victims that he was to replace were sacrificed, Christ offers himself as a

<sup>1</sup> JOHN 1<sup>st</sup>

<sup>2</sup> HEB. 10<sup>5</sup>



victim to be immolated for God's glory and our salvation. He knows well what that implies: the agony of the Garden, the pretorium and its ignominies, the cross and its cruel tortures. He accepts it all with joy in his heart.

For him, the ceremony of the Presentation had a deeper significance than for the ordinary first-born. It was a real offering that was to be consummated by the immolation on Calvary.

2. *The sacrifice in the heart of Mary.* Although the infant Savior performed the act of oblation in the sanctuary of his soul, yet he was outwardly presented to God in the arms of Mary and Joseph. But Mary well understood the import and extent of this offering. Since the angel had revealed the mystery that was to take place within her, the veil of the future had been drawn aside and God's plan in the work of our redemption was disclosed to her. She understood how it was to be accomplished by her Son and also how she was to coöperate in it. As co-redemptrix of the human race, she would partake of Christ's chalice and be associated with His immolation. We shall find her at the foot of the cross, renewing the offering made at the Presentation.

Simeon's prophecy, that a sword of grief would pierce her soul, she already knew. When she consecrated her new-born Son to God, she foresaw his sufferings and her own anguish. Yet this sad prospect did not shake her courage. Like Abraham, she promptly submits to the will of God, who asks of her the sacrifice of her only son.

3. *The sacrifice in the heart of Simeon and Anna.* The evangelist mentions, among the witnesses of the Presentation, the aged Simeon, whose blessed privilege it was to hold the infant Savior in his arms, and Anna, the pious widow who was, so to speak, the first apostle of the incarnate Word. *Now she, at the same hour, coming in, confessed to the Lord: and spoke of him to all that looked for the redemption of Israel.*<sup>1</sup> Both these privileged souls, consecrated to God, were filled with the spirit of sacrifice.

Simeon, long detached from earthly things, guided by the Holy Spirit, was waiting only for the advent of the Redeemer whom he was to behold with his own eyes. He saw Joseph and Mary carry the infant Jesus into the Temple, and at once recognized him as the Savior promised to Israel, the object of his ardent

<sup>1</sup> LUKE 2<sup>38</sup>

sighs. As there is no longer anything to hold his heart to the earth, he offers his life to God. *Now thou dost dismiss thy servant, O Lord, according to thy word in peace; because my eyes have seen thy salvation.*<sup>1</sup> Thus does he join in the sacrifice of Jesus and Mary.

In the case of the prophetess Anna, God had long ago broken the bonds that attached her to the world. Free from all earthly love, she had retired to the solitude of the sanctuary, there consecrating her life to God by fasting and prayer. She is privileged to see and adore the promised Messias.

### ACTS AND RESOLUTIONS

The sacrifice offered to God in the Temple and consummated on Calvary, is continued in the mystery of the altar. Jesus is the victim. In the Temple, he offers himself to God by the hands of Mary, his mother; in his Eucharistic life, it is by the hands of chosen ones whom he associates to his priesthood, and fills with his spirit, whom he desires to see, like the Blessed Virgin, participate in his sacrificial life. The faithful, too, assisting at mass, take

<sup>1</sup> LUKE 2<sup>29</sup>

part in the immolation by joining in the dispositions and intentions of Jesus and of the priest in whose hands he is immolated.

Every day I witness the adorable sacrifice, like Simeon and Anna; soon I shall fill the rôle of the Blessed Virgin.

My Savior, those whom thou didst call to coöperate in the mystery of thy Presentation were pure, holy, fervent souls. Called to a like honor, I should strive to imitate them, to live a life of sacrifice. If I am to become thy priest, like thee I should offer myself a victim to God. May the mystery of thy Presentation produce this grace in my soul. I ask it through the intercession of thy most Blessed Mother and St. Joseph.

I resolve:

1. To hear mass more devoutly;
2. To imitate the sacrificial dispositions of Christ.
3. By purity of heart, to prepare for the privilege of offering him at the altar.

*Sacrifice and oblation thou wouldst not. . . .  
Then said I: Behold I come.*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> HEB. 10<sup>5,7</sup>

## X

### THE COMPASSION

#### SUMMARY

- I. We will contemplate the sorrowful Mother at the foot of the cross, and the Savior giving his Mother and St. John to each other. We will compassionate the sorrow that filled their souls.
- II. We will consider that Mary, at the foot of the cross, shows us how we ought to honor the sufferings of Christ.

1. *She meditates on those sufferings.* Since Simeon's prophecy, the mystery of the cross was her continual thought. During the passion, it became an overwhelming reality for her. On the way to Calvary, she followed his every step.

2. *She compassionates the suffering of Christ.* First she suffered from the perspective of his agony, then upon its announcement to her, and finally witnessed it herself. *The violence of her grief, says St. Bernard, was equaled only by the greatness of her love.*

3. *She associates herself with the sufferings of Christ.* She desired to die in her Son's place. She entered into his dispositions. She wished to become one victim with him.

- III. We will ask for the grace to imitate the Blessed Virgin in this mystery of her sorrow.

We will resolve:

1. Tomorrow at Mass to unite ourselves to the Blessed Mother in the mystery of her sorrows;
2. To recite occasionally some verses of the *Stabat Mater*.

*Ora pro nobis, Virgo dolorosissima, ut digni efficiamur promissionibus Christi.*

### ADORATION

At Christ's presentation in the Temple, the aged Simeon had announced to Mary: *Thy own soul a sword shall pierce.*<sup>1</sup> This prophecy was accomplished at the foot of the cross. St. John, who witnessed the same, gives us the details.

Our Savior is about to consummate his painful sacrifice. Before closing his eyes in death, he opens them for the last time and their look meets the eyes of his blessed Mother. She had, in fact, by overcoming the weakness of nature, followed her divine Son on the road to Calvary. There, not far from the ignominious gibbet, she stands, contemplating the death agony of her Son. *There stood by the cross of Jesus, his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalen.*<sup>2</sup> Christ also sees

<sup>1</sup> LUKE 2<sup>35</sup>

<sup>2</sup> JN. 19<sup>25</sup>

his beloved disciple in company with Mary and the holy women. *Woman*, he says, *behold thy son*. *After that, he said to the disciple: Behold thy mother*.<sup>1</sup>

Having performed this double duty of friendship and of filial devotion, he bows his head and expires.

With the eyes of faith, let us contemplate this scene of simple majesty and treasure the words that fall from the lips of our dying Redeemer. But no words will adequately express the grief of soul that drew the blessed Mother and St. John into closer union at this moment of supreme anguish.

### CONSIDERATIONS

Mary, at the foot of the cross, shows us how we ought to honor the sufferings of Christ: she meditates on them, she compassionates them, she associates herself with them.

1. *Mary meditates on the sufferings of Christ*. Since the day of Simeon's prophecy, the mystery of the cross was her continual thought. May we not suppose that our Savior made known to her the details of the suffering he was

<sup>1</sup> JN. 19<sup>26</sup>

to undergo? How many incidents of daily life at Nazareth would recall them to her mind?

During the hours of the passion, all those details became an overwhelming reality for her. Among those who, through the ages, have meditated deeply on the sufferings of Christ, no one was ever so closely united to them, no one ever sounded their depths so profoundly, no one ever comprehended them so completely as the Blessed Virgin.

It is true that she was not present at the agony in the garden, in the pretorium; she did not behold with her bodily eyes the opprobrious insults of our Savior's trial; she was not a witness of the scourging, the crowning with thorns, and the injustice of Caiaphas and Pilate. But she had a clear intuition of all those sufferings. In spirit, she heard the sentence of death, saw Christ burdened with the cross. Then, she betook herself to the way leading to Calvary, and, with her very eyes, beheld his sufferings.

After that, she followed his every step. Several times she saw him fall from exhaustion; she heard the blows of the hammer driving the nails into his hands and feet; for three hours she watched him hanging on the cross; she



listened to his last words; she saw him expire; when his body was taken down, she received it into her arms. She also knew the internal anguish of our Lord's soul during those long hours. Better than any one else did she penetrate the meaning of that mysterious cry: *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me.*<sup>1</sup>

Following the example of our Blessed Mother, we, too, should be attentive witnesses of Christ's sufferings. For they ought frequently to be the object of our meditation and contemplation.

2. *Mary compassionates the sufferings of Christ.* The more complete and penetrating her knowledge of them, the more bitter was her grief. By degrees, it became greater and greater. *Cui comparabo te, filia Sion? Magna est velut mare contritio tua.*<sup>2</sup>

At first, it was a sorrow produced by the anticipation of Christ's agony which she had before her eyes during the whole course of her life.

Then, it became more poignant when one of his disciples, perhaps St. John, brought her word that her divine Son was in the hands of the Jews. She understood that the fatal hour

<sup>1</sup> MT. 27<sup>46</sup>

<sup>2</sup> JER. 21<sup>3</sup>

had come, that the prophecy of years ago was about to be accomplished, or rather that it was already being fulfilled. She could see him as a victim in the hands of his executioners. This, in very truth, was the very sword that pierced her soul.

Her grief reached its height when she beheld his sufferings on the cross—the wounds, the blood. As the prophet Isaias had foretold:

*We have seen him, and there was no sightliness . . . a man of sorrows, and acquainted with infirmity; and his look was as it were hidden.*<sup>1</sup>

What words can depict the depth of her grief as she stood at the foot of the cross?

Mary loved Jesus more than any mother ever loved son, the more so as his treasures of grace and holiness were perfectly known to her. He was her glory, her consolation, her all. What, then, must have been her sorrow to see him delivered to agony and death! *The violence of her grief, says St. Bernard, was equaled only by the greatness of her love.*<sup>2</sup> In the words of St. Bonaventure, *She suffered in her heart all that Christ suffered in his body.*<sup>3</sup>

Every soul that loves the Savior feels com-

<sup>1</sup> Is. 53<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Serm. 5 de Verbis Apost.

<sup>3</sup> De Planctu Virg.

passion for his sufferings. By the mouth of the psalmist, he says to us: *I looked for one that would grieve together with me.*<sup>1</sup> Mother of Sorrow, help us respond to this desire; grant us a few drops from the ocean of sorrow which flooded thy soul.

*Eia, mater, fons amoris,  
Me sentire vim doloris,  
Fac ut tecum lugeam.*

3. *Mary associates herself with the sufferings of Christ.* In the first place, she eagerly desires to suffer and die in her Son's place for the salvation of the world. If David's grief over an unworthy son prompted him to cry out: *Would to God that I might die for thee,*<sup>2</sup> with how much better reason must not Mary have entertained this sublime disposition at the sight of her dying Son! How gladly, she would have undergone all his torments! Knowing that such a desire could not be realized, she at least entered into the thoughts and dispositions of Christ on the cross. She offered him to God, as she had already done in the Temple, making amend with him to the divine justice for the sins of the world. And towards sinners,

<sup>1</sup> Ps. 68<sup>21</sup>

<sup>2</sup> II KINGS 18<sup>33</sup>

for whom he was shedding his blood, she felt that unspeakable tenderness and charity which she has ever since manifested for them.

Uniting her suffering and anguish to his, she wished to become one victim with him, to share, in so far as possible, in his immolation. As one spiritual writer says: *They offered to God one and the same sacrifice: the Son upon the altar of the cross, the mother upon the altar of her heart.*<sup>1</sup> Thus did our Blessed Mother practice what has been so strongly recommended by the saints; to unite our crosses to the cross of Christ. With the great apostle might she say: *I fill up these things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ, in my flesh, for his body, which is the Church.*<sup>2</sup>

## ACTS AND RESOLUTIONS

Mary, Mother of Christ, well might thou repeat the words of Holy Writ: *I will go to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense.*<sup>3</sup> There, in the bitterness of keenest grief, didst thou offer the most august of all sacrifices. In this way, thou wouldst teach

<sup>1</sup> ARNOLD. CARNUT., *De laud. B. V. M.*

<sup>2</sup> COL. 1<sup>24</sup>

<sup>3</sup> CANT. 4<sup>6</sup>

us how we ought to honor the sufferings of Christ. Thou dost go before us along the road sprinkled with his blood. The mystery of thy compassion is our model.

This mystery also contains a grace in which we may participate: grace to understand our Lord's suffering; grace to compassionate them, grace of resignation and of strength to carry our cross; grace of repentance to expiate our sins; grace of confidence in God and complete abandonment to his divine will.

May thy divine Son, through thy intercession, pour into our souls this precious fruit of thy sorrows! May we remain, with thee and all the saints, at the foot of the cross and in this school to learn how to love and serve a God who has loved us even to the point of dying for us.

Let us resolve:

1. This morning at mass, to unite ourselves to the blessed Mother in the mystery of her sorrows;

2. To recite occasionally some verses of the *Stabat Mater*.

*Ora pro nobis, Virgo dolorosissima, ut digni efficiamur promissionibus Christi.*

# XI

## THE ASSUMPTION

### SUMMARY

I. We will recall the extraordinary honors that the Blessed Virgin receives in heaven and on earth. We will thank our Lord for having so magnificently associated her in his glory.

II. We will consider:

1. *The blessed Virgin's life after the Ascension.* Her presence sustained the infant Church in its first struggles. She was the apostles' helper. Yet, her life was chiefly one of contemplation and prayer.

2. *Her death.* It was holy and heavenly. The joys of heaven were to replace the sorrows of earth.

3. *Her glorification in heaven.* Her Virginal body did not undergo the corruption of the tomb. Her risen body entered into the bliss of eternal life. In the kingdom where Christ reigns, she had been crowned Queen.

III. We will see that, without hesitation, we may render to her all the honors that can be accorded a creature.

We will resolve:

1. Often during the day to think of Mary's glory in heaven;

2. To increase our devotion to Mary.

*Quanto devotionis affectu voluit eam honorari, qui totius boni plenitudinem posuit in Maria.*

## ADORATION

Let us recall the extraordinary honors that the Blessed Virgin receives in heaven and on earth. In heaven she is higher than all the angels. In the Church on earth, she is the object of a cult that is paid to no other saint.

Thus does Christ glorify his mother. As she participated in his sufferings, so she shares his glory. For her as for her divine Son, humiliation was followed by triumph, sorrow was crowned with joy.

Let us rejoice at the lofty position of power to which our blessed Mother has been elevated. Let us thank our Lord for having so magnificently associated her in his glory.

Nor let us forget that Mary's triumph is also ours. She is full of a maternal tenderness and solicitude for us that should prompt us confidently to ask that she make us imitate her virtues on earth and share her glory in heaven.

## CONSIDERATIONS

Let us consider:

1. *The Blessed Virgin's life after the Ascension.* Our risen Savior, before ascending to

his Father, passed forty days on earth to strengthen his apostles' faith in his resurrection and to give them his final instructions. He also willed that his blessed Mother should remain some time in the world that the infant Church might enjoy her presence and thus be sustained in the struggles it would have to undergo.

She took part in the apostles' retreat and was present when the Holy Ghost descended upon them. The sacred writers tell us nothing further of her.

But we may conjecture what must have been her life until her reunion with Christ in heaven. In retirement at St. John's home, she was the apostles' helper in their great work, enkindling and guiding their zeal. Yet, her life was chiefly one of contemplation and prayer. In her, were verified these words of St. Paul: *But our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ.*<sup>1</sup>

It is affirmed by spiritual writers that her divine Son frequently appeared to her. Often, indeed, was she united to him in holy communion.

<sup>1</sup> PHIL. 3<sup>30</sup>



2. *Her death.* Her mission on earth was ended. The joys of heaven were to replace the sorrows of earth. *Arise, make haste . . . and come.*<sup>1</sup> Who will fittingly describe that scene of death, so calm, serene, consoling?

The apostles, notified by St. John, gathered about the death-bed and, in religious silence, watched the approach of death. Their heart is divided between grief over their own loss and joy at seeing Mary enter into the repose of the saints.

3. *Her glorification in heaven.* Jesus did not undergo the corruption of the tomb. His blessed Mother enjoyed the same privilege. The constant tradition of the Church testifies that she too arose from the dead and that her glorified body reunited to her soul, entered into the bliss of eternal life. It is true that holy Church has not yet placed the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin among her defined dogmas. Nevertheless, her saintly doctors affirm it, the liturgy supposes it, the belief of the faithful is unanimous and constant.

It is certainly a fitting supposition that the body which was the sanctuary of Christ upon his coming into the world, which was the first

<sup>1</sup> CANT. 2<sup>10</sup>

altar on which he offered himself to God, which was always free from sin, should rise from the dead, without suffering corruption.

In the Kingdom where Christ reigns, Mary has been crowned queen. *Adstitit regina a dextris tuis.*<sup>1</sup> says the psalmist. She reigns in heaven where angels and saints pay homage to her, on earth where God has made her dispenser of his graces.

### ACTS AND RESOLUTIONS

The life of the blessed Virgin, like that of Jesus, begun in joy and continued mostly in sorrow, is consummated in glory. Considering the honor and dignity bestowed upon her, we need not hesitate to render to her all the honors that can be accorded a creature.

Not only has Jesus glorified Mary; he has made her the depository of his power; to her he has confided the dispensations of his graces. That is why the Church calls her *vita, dulcedo, spes nostra*. Let us take to heart the admonition of St. Bernard; *In dangers, in difficulties, in perplexities, think of Mary and invoke her . . . . If you think of and follow her, you will not go*

<sup>1</sup> Ps. 44<sup>10</sup>

*wrong, nor despair if you beg of her. With her help, you will not fall nor be fatigued; if she is favorable, you will be sure to arrive.*<sup>1</sup>

Let us resolve:

1. Often during the day to think of Mary's glory in heaven;

2. To increase our devotion to Mary.

*Quanto devotionis affectu voluit eam honorari, qui totius boni plenitudinem posuit in Maria.*<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Sermon on the Nativity*

<sup>2</sup> ST. BERNARD: Sermon II on *Missus est*.

## XII

### THE MONTH OF MARY

#### SUMMARY

I. We will adore the Holy Spirit inspiring those numerous devotions that manifest the abundance of life in the Church. We will picture the entire Christian world united in this devotion of the month of Mary.

II. We will consider why we should cherish this devotion.

1. *Its object.* As we consecrate to the Blessed Virgin part of each day, of each week, and month, so it is fitting we should set aside one month of the year in her honor. This month best symbolizes her prerogatives.

2. *Its practices.* It sums up all the devotions of the Church in her honor and neglects none of the privileges and mysteries of her life.

3. *Its development* bears the mark of a divine work. It has been authorized by the Church and has wonderfully attracted the people.

III. We will ask God not to let us neglect this means of sanctification nor turn a deaf ear to our Blessed Mother's invitation.

We will resolve:

1. To have the thought of the Blessed Virgin more frequently in mind;

2. To perform our actions in union with her;

3. Often to ask her blessing.

*Behold thy mother.*

### ADORATION

Let us adore the Holy Spirit living in the Church and inspiring those numerous devotions by which he manifests the abundance of her life. *Florete flores quasi lilium, et date odorem, et frondete in gratiam.*<sup>1</sup> Through them grace is communicated to souls for their purification and sanctification.

Today, the month of Mary is the most popular devotion in honor of the Mother of God. Let us picture to ourselves the entire Christian world uniting in the same thought of love, consecrating to the Blessed Virgin every day of this month. From the gorgeous cathedral to the humblest chapel, in every church there is an altar in her honor, where her statue is surrounded with lights and flowers, where the faithful will gather to pay homage to her grandeur, to sing hymns in her honor, to hear her praises, to place themselves under her protection.

We should pray for a share in the graces which she will obtain for the Church during this month.

<sup>1</sup> ECCLU. 39<sup>18</sup>

## CONSIDERATIONS

Let us consider why we should cherish the devotion of the month of Mary.

1. *It is fitting that this month should be consecrated to our blessed Mother.* No day of our life passes without our paying honor to her, without some prayers addressed to her. The liturgical office, by which the different hours of the day are consecrated to God, contains in each part, an invocation to Mary. And the last day of the week is especially set apart to her honor. In almost every month of the year, is to be found one of her feasts. To complete this cycle of devotions to the Blessed Virgin, there remained only to select one month to be the month of Mary. This pious practice soon became one of the general devotions of the Church.

And what month more fit than May? Following the winter and ushering in the glories of spring, these are the days when all nature rejoices. So, too, the Blessed Virgin brought joy to the world. *Gaudium annuntiavit universo mundo.*<sup>1</sup> Well may we apply to her birth

<sup>1</sup> *Antiph. in festo Nat. B. V. M.*

the words of the Canticle: *Winter is now past, the rain is over and gone.*<sup>1</sup>

The rich vegetation which now spreads over the earth recalls the beauties of virtue and grace with which the Spirit of God adorned her soul. As the month of May, by its leaves and flowers, announces the coming harvests of summer and the fruits of autumn, so did the Blessed Virgin's presence announce the fruit of eternal life that was to be born of her.

How fitting, then, that May should be chosen as her month.

2. *This devotion sums up all the devotions of the Church in honor of the Blessed Virgin.* The piety of past ages has handed down to us a variety of devotional practices by which we honor the Mother of God—numerous feasts, sodalities, prayers, distinguished from one another by the special purpose in view or by the nature of the homage rendered to her or by various titles she has to our love and confidence.

But in the devotion of the month of Mary, we find them all united. For herein it is not merely one single mystery of her life, one of her titles, or one of her prerogatives that is offered

<sup>1</sup> CANT. 2<sup>11</sup>

for our consideration and homage. It is Mary in her entire life, in the plenitude of her mysteries; in the full extent of her divine greatness; in the beauty of her interior life and the modesty of her exterior conduct; in the holiness of her earthly life and the glory of her life in heaven; in the bonds that unite her to the persons of the blessed Trinity, especially to the incarnate Word, her divine Son; in her relations with the Church in heaven, on earth, and in purgatory.

3. *This devotion bears the seal of a divine work.* Whatever the Church approves and authorizes, especially what she seeks to spread, deserves our respect, for therein we recognize the action of the Holy Ghost directing and inspiring the Church. When we consider that she has enriched this devotion with numerous indulgences, we must regard it as a divine institution.

Was there ever in the Church a practice of piety more visibly blessed by God? Everywhere the pastors of souls are urging their people to participate in it. Although so recent a devotion, the faithful throughout the world, with increasing fervor, are eagerly embracing this beautiful devotion.

Hence we must recognize it as a truly



divine institution supernaturally inspired to rekindle our devotion to the Mother of God and to help us share more abundantly the blessings and graces attached to it.

### ACTS AND RESOLUTIONS

O my God, do not allow my neglect to render this new means of sanctification profitless. It would be a misfortune for me to feel none of the warmth of devotion which it is enkindling throughout the Catholic world, for my heart to be unmoved by these exercises in which I will take part. Has the Blessed Virgin good reason to reproach me with having derived too little profit from them in the past?

Again, she invites me to turn to her. May I not be deaf to her invitation. May I, on the other hand, consecrate this month entirely to her, and deserve her helpful protection more and more.

I resolve:

1. To have the thought of the Blessed Virgin more frequently in my mind.
2. To perform my actions in union with her.
3. Often to ask her blessing.

*Behold thy mother.*<sup>1</sup>

## II. THE SAINTS

### XIII. ST. FRANCIS XAVIER

#### SUMMARY

I. We will adore the Holy Spirit giving the Church that power of expansion which is her distinctive characteristic. We will honor St. Francis Xavier under whose patronage the Church has placed the propagation of the faith.

II. We will consider three reasons why we should be interested in the foreign missions.

1. *The holiness of the work.* In spirit, we will follow our missionaries to the distant fields of their apostolic labor.

2. *An honor to the Church.* Their work bears witness to the truth of the Church. Her missionaries are her glorious crown.

3. *A stimulus to priestly zeal.* Every priest ought to be an apostle. The lives of missionaries are an inspiration to greater zeal.

III. We will recall that vast countries have not yet received the light of the gospel. We will see that it is our duty to help remedy this sad condition.

We will resolve:

1. To pray for the missions;
2. To help them materially;
3. To answer God's invitation if he calls us to the foreign missions.

*Going, therefore, teach ye all nations.*

## ADORATION

Let us adore the Holy Spirit residing in the Church not only to sanctify it but to give it that power of expansion which is her distinctive characteristic and by virtue of which she is ceaselessly spreading over the world. All the nations of the earth have been promised her as an inheritance. *All nations shall flow into it,*<sup>1</sup> says Holy Writ. There is no country that does not belong to her, none that she can not claim as her own. *Ask of me, and I will give thee the Gentiles for thy inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for thy possession.*<sup>2</sup> Our Lord himself compares her to the mustard seed which *when it is grown up, is greater than all herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come, and dwell in the branches thereof.*<sup>3</sup>

Since the time of the apostles, the world has witnessed the steady fulfillment of these promises. God has raised up apostolic men to extend the boundaries of his kingdom by their labors and often at the cost of their blood. To-day, the work of the foreign missions is growing with providential increase.

<sup>1</sup> Is. 2<sup>d</sup><sup>2</sup> Ps. 2<sup>d</sup><sup>3</sup> Mt. 13<sup>th</sup>

Let us especially honor St. Francis Xavier whose feast we celebrate to-day, and under whose patronage the Church has placed the work of the Propagation of the Faith.

This incomparable missionary, by the vast extent and success of his labors, repeated the wonders of the apostolic age. Braving every danger, he crossed the seas, traversed immense countries, converted entire kingdoms, baptized more than a million idolaters, and died at the age of forty-six, still contemplating new conquests.

Let us thank God for having given this holy apostle to the Church; and let us implore his divine goodness to raise up successors who will continue the work to which St. Francis consecrated his life, extending the kingdom of Christ and bringing the world under the sway of the Gospel.

### CONSIDERATIONS

Let us consider three reasons why we should be interested in the foreign missions.

1. *The holiness of the work.* Whatever the circumstances under which priestly zeal is exercised, it is a noble and holy work, for *of all divine works the most divine is to coöperate with*

*God in saving souls.*<sup>1</sup> This truth has probably contributed not a little to determine our vocation. But is it not true that among priestly works the most beautiful, the noblest, the most meritorious is the work accomplished by our missionaries in heathen lands?

In spirit, let us follow them to those distant lands. After severing all the ties that attach them to the world, after forsaking the most legitimate and cherished attachments, through countless dangers they go to seek not fortune nor pleasure, but souls.

Sometimes they live in the midst of savages so depraved as scarcely to deserve the name of men; sometimes in a civilization, in some respects worse than barbarian, a civilization that has abandoned itself to most debasing vices and plunged into the grossest errors. Such is the soil which they are struggling to convert into a fruitful field for God.

They arrive, in one hand the cross, in the other the Gospel. The undertaking is hard and dangerous. Every sort of obstacle besets their path; they must engage in fatiguing and thankless labor, undergo severe privations,

<sup>1</sup> ST. DYONISIUS: *De caelesti hier.*

live in isolation; it may even happen that captivity, torture, and a cruel death will be their portion. But a holy zeal prompts them to repeat the words of St. Paul: *But I fear none of these things, neither do I count my life more precious than myself, so that I may consummate my course and the ministry of the word which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.*<sup>1</sup> Full of confidence in Christ, who called them to the apostolate and whose grace sustains them, they rise above all difficulties. Convinced that they are doing God's work, they pursue their task with dauntless courage.

God blesses their labor. At sound of their voice, darkness is dissipated, souls arise from their debasement, upon the ruins of paganism arises a Christian people among whom Christ is known, loved and served, who understand and practice the maxims of the Gospel. This glorious work is going on wherever there are infidels to be converted.

2. *An honor to the Church* that commissions them to go forth, inspires, strengthens, and encourages them in their laborious ministry. The apostolate, the highest expression of zeal

<sup>1</sup> ACTS 20<sup>24</sup>

and charity, is one of the characteristic traits of the true Church.

By their labors, the missionaries are a living witness to the truth of the Church; for only the truth could make men capable of such sacrifices. At times, the people whom they evangelize have required no other proof to convince and convert them.

The Church can point to numberless examples of extraordinary holiness, of which she is justly proud and which declare her divinity to the whole world. But she possesses no grander, more beautiful and heroic mark than this multitude of missionaries carrying the Gospel to the ends of the earth. It is her glorious crown, the most striking proof of the presence of the Holy Spirit abiding with her.

Humanly speaking, the Catholic missions can not be explained. If we consider their uninterrupted duration from apostolic times to our own day, the untold number of those who have devoted their lives to the work, the sacrifices required in their pursuit, and the vastness of the results, we must needs be convinced that they are a divine work plainly manifesting the supernatural action of grace.

3. *A stimulus to priestly zeal.* Every priest

ought to be an apostle, for he is a priest for no purpose but the salvation of souls. But what is better calculated to kindle the fire of apostolic zeal than the sight of our missionaries leaving lives of self-denial and even undergoing persecution. These men have sacrificed everything to win souls to Christ.

Are we not impelled to acknowledge, in the language of the Imitation: *Alas, what is our life, if it be compared with theirs!*<sup>1</sup> Yet, like them, we too will receive the character and grace of the priesthood; like them, we will assume the obligation of laboring for souls. Should we not, at least, imitate the wholeheartedness of their zeal?

While still in the seminary, we will devote ourselves day by day to acquiring that knowledge and holiness which God expects in his priests. Neither the difficulties of study nor the constraint of the rule nor the struggle of self-conquest will discourage us. Whenever we feel these burdens especially wearisome, let us recall the missionaries' sacrifices, beside which, our trials are but trifles.

<sup>1</sup> I. 18



## ACTS AND RESOLUTIONS

My God, despite the efforts of apostolic men who for so many centuries have labored to convert the pagan world, there are still vast countries where the light of the Gospel has scarcely penetrated. St. Paul's soul was grieved at the sight of idolatrous Athens. *His spirit was stirred within him, seeing the city wholly given to idolatry.*<sup>1</sup> Should not the hearts of all thy disciples be saddened when, glancing at a map of the world, they note what immense multitudes of men, even after nineteen centuries of Christianity, have not yet heard the blessed name of thy divine Son nor shared in the fruit of redemption?

Thou, O Lord, hast permitted it to be so. Therein, I adore one of the profoundest mysteries of thy providence.

If, however, I possess the spirit of Christ, the great high-priest, I will aid, to the full extent of my power, to remedy this sad condition. Always, will I cherish a special solicitude for the foreign missions, as a work of capital importance.

In the first place, then, I will recommend

<sup>1</sup> ACTS 17<sup>16</sup>

the missions in my prayers to God, asking him to prosper them, to summon numerous laborers to that portion of his vineyard, to bestow on them courageous zeal, and to fructify their labors.

In the second place, I will do what I can to aid the material resources of the missions both by my personal donations and by interesting others to do likewise, especially through the medium of organized missionary societies, so that our apostles may not lack the means to set up tabernacles for Jesus among those who know him not.

Finally, I am ready to consecrate my own life to the foreign missions if providential indications should show me that such is God's holy will.

May divine grace, through the intercession of St. Francis Xavier, strengthen me in these purposes.

*Going therefore, teach ye all nations.*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> MAT. 28<sup>20</sup>

## XIV. ST. AMBROSE

### SUMMARY

I. We will adore Our Lord communicating to whom he chooses the powers of the priesthood; we will adore the divine intervention in the ordination of St. Ambrose. In the time of strife, God pointed out, by a miracle, the bishop needed by the Church of Milan.

II. We will consider in St. Ambrose, the confessor's holiness, the pontiff's dignity, the doctor's learning.

1. *The confessor's holiness.* He practised purity by detachment from all things. His piety was most tender. He devoted himself to the reform of the clergy and to the instruction and edification of the people.

2. *The pontiff's dignity.* St. Ambrose showed the loftiness of his office by the dignity of his bearing. Theodosius, the emperor, humbly accepted the penance he imposed upon him.

3. *The doctor's learning.* As bishop, St. Ambrose regarded the acquisition of knowledge as a duty. He became a master of sacred science. He was inferior to none of the illustrious writers and speakers of the age.

III. We will ask ourselves whether we share in the detachment, the dignity of conduct, the love of study, so conspicuous in St. Ambrose.

We will resolve:

1. To cultivate the spirit of detachment.
2. To correct whatever may be unpriestly in our conduct;
3. To increase our esteem for study.

*Ecce sacerdos magnus, qui in diebus suis placuit Deo, et inventus est justus.*

### ADORATION

Let us adore our Lord, possessing in himself and communicating to those whom he chooses, the grace and powers of the priesthood. He it is who plants in the soul the seed of vocation, he who makes this call known to the Church by certain marks. Thus, thanks to his all-powerful action, the priesthood is perpetuated and the faithful throughout the world are provided with pious and devoted pastors.

Let us adore the divine intervention of Christ, the invisible head of the Church, especially in the ordination of St. Ambrose, whose feast we celebrate to-day.

The Church of Milan, divided and wasted by heresy, needed a bishop of sterling faith, fiery zeal, and staunch courage. But powerful influences arose, the Church became a scene of bitter strife, and there were indications that the election of a bishop would be the result of

cabal and intrigue. Then appears in the midst of the assembly a magistrate, esteemed by all. With words of moderation, he calmed the strife. It is Ambrose. Respect for his dignity and the force of his eloquence imposed silence. While he is still speaking a child's voice is heard: "Ambrose, the bishop."

The cry is taken up by the crowd and Ambrose is constrained to accept the episcopal office.

My God, I am happily, I trust, in the number of those whom Thou hast called. For years past, I have been drawn to the sanctuary. My vocation, like that of St. Ambrose, is the work of thy grace. Can I recall all thou hast done for me in view of this destiny, without repeating the Apostle's words: *Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift.*<sup>1</sup>

### CONSIDERATIONS

On St. Ambrose, the Church bestows the threefold title of confessor, pontiff, and doctor. Let us, therefore, consider in this saintly archbishop the confessor's holiness, the pontiff's dignity, and the doctor's learning.

<sup>1</sup> II COR. 9<sup>15</sup>

1. *The confessor's holiness*, which St. Ambrose possessed to an eminent degree. In a minister of the altar, holiness should consist of three things: to preserve the purity of his heart by detachment from all things; to live united to God by prayer; to devote himself to the spiritual good of others by charity and zeal.

St. Ambrose, before his elevation to the episcopate, although only a catechumen, led a life that was notably honorable and pure. On becoming bishop of Milan, he understood this was no longer sufficient. In order to live in more complete detachment, he generously gave away all that he possessed. On the poor, he bestowed whatever gold and silver he had, and the rest of his goods he gave to his church. Fearing even the least attachment, he entrusted to his brother, St. Satyrus, the administration of his temporal affairs. He considered that he could thus better apply himself to God's work.

His piety was most tender. His biographers mention the profound piety with which he used to celebrate the holy mysteries. Prayers that he composed for preparation before Mass testify to his faith and his love for

Christ. Thence, came the unction of his private conversation and public addresses. Especially was this manifest in the sacred tribunal of penance where his fatherly tenderness to sinners brought them to him in great numbers.

He made the sanctification of his flock his chief duty. First of all he devoted himself to the reform of the clergy. Knowing that a good priest is an inestimable treasure and that one unfaithful to his vocation is a cause of untold harm to the Church, he strove to elevate the clergy to the loftiness of their sacred duties. The unworthy were weeded out. His efforts to make them modest and self-restrained, to make their external conduct conform to a high standard of clerical propriety, met with complete success.

His discourses to the people were frequent and instructive. And he attracted them to the public devotions of the Church by the pomp and splendor of the divine Office. The Ambrosian liturgy, still in use in Milan, bears witness to his zeal for the worship of God. To him are due the singing of hymns and the institution of psalmody in the Western Church.

In fine, he was tireless in protecting his

flock from Arianism and other errors that threatened their faith.

2. *The pontiff's dignity. Sacerdos magnus.* The pontiffs of the Old Law were God's representatives on earth. But more truly do the priests of the New Law resemble the great High Priest, Jesus Christ. He lives in them, and through them reveals his greatness. *Ecce sacerdos magnus*, says the Church, *non est inventus similis illi*. And again: *Amavit eum Dominus, et ornavit eum*.

St. Ambrose showed the loftiness of his episcopal office by the dignity of his bearing. He even halted the great Theodosius at the cathedral door, and the emperor humbly accepted the penance imposed on him, thereby recognizing in St. Ambrose a royalty higher than his own. Such is the prestige of the priestly dignity, such the respect it inspires, such the influence it exerts, when it is marked by holiness of life.

3. *The doctor's learning.* God being the source of all knowledge, whatever its object, the Church esteems and honors it. But to the sacred learning of its Doctors, it pays religious homage; for such wisdom is inspired by the Holy Ghost, it relates to God and his religion,



and its fruit is the triumph for the Church and the sanctification of souls.

Among the Doctors of the Church, St. Ambrose occupies an eminent place. Before he became a bishop, he was a stranger to the knowledge of Sacred Scriptures and theology. But once a bishop, he regarded the acquisition of this knowledge as a duty. Each day, he devoted a considerable time to the reading of Holy Writ and the writings of the Fathers. The better to accomplish his purpose, he surrounded himself with scholarly men. Among others, we are told of a learned and pious priest of Rome, sent to him by St. Damasus; this priest afterwards succeeded him in the see of Milan.

Thus did St. Ambrose become a master of sacred science. He was fond of explaining the Bible to the people and he made it the foundation of all his discourses. The Church of that age abounded in illustrious writers and speakers. St. Ambrose was inferior to none of them. In fact, his numerous works have won for him a place among the four great Doctors honored by the Western Church.

## ACTS AND RESOLUTIONS

St. Ambrose is held up as a model for my imitation. I, too, am called by God to exercise, in a humble sphere, the ministry of Christ by the exercise of detachment, piety, and zeal, to teach respect for the priesthood by the dignity of my conduct, and to become a light for others by the extent and depth of my learning. But I must fit myself for these grave responsibilities during my years in the seminary. What progress am I making in piety and priestly virtues? Have I at least begun to cultivate detachment from all things save Christ?

Am I acquiring the restraint and dignity of conduct, the propriety of clerical bearing that I will need when I must walk in the sight of men as a priest of God?

My seminary days should be a life of study. Am I conscientious in the study of sacred science? Or do I seek to acquire merely the minimum of knowledge that will satisfy my superiors?

My God, grant me the strength of will needful for the accomplishment of these essential duties. I ask this grace through the

intercession of the great Doctor whose feast we celebrate today.

I resolve:

1. To cultivate the spirit of detachment;
2. To correct whatever may be unpriestly in my conduct;
3. To increase my esteem for study.

*Ecce sacerdos magnus, qui in diebus suis placuit Deo, et inventus est justus.*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Missa SS. Pontif.*

## XV. ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST

### SUMMARY

I. We will adore Our Lord's love for St. John. He loves all men. In a special manner, he loved the apostles. Among the apostles, St. John was most worthy of his friendship. We will rejoice with this disciple.

II. We will consider the threefold treasure poured into the heart of St. John.

1. *A treasure of purity.* Jesus loves men's souls in the proportion of their purity. To this apostle he imparted the gift of purity. To him did Christ entrust Mary his mother.

2. *A treasure of truth.* Purity of heart best disposes the soul to receive heavenly light. With unfailing memory, he has recorded the words of his Master. The future had no secrets for him and he was able to describe the future triumphs of the church.

3. *A treasure of charity.* Our Lord was inspired only by love. He would make St. John a sharer in this disposition. The life of the disciple was one of love for Christ, for Mary, and for souls.

III. We will call to mind that we, too, should possess this triple treasure and we will ask ourselves if we are striving to acquire it.

We will resolve:

1. To weed out from our hearts whatever may diminish its purity.

2. Through the intercession of St. John, to pray for the light we need in learning the divine truths that are the subject of our studies;

3. To renew our love for Christ, for his blessed Mother, and for his Church.

*Sancte Joannes, discipule quem diligebat Jesus, ora pro nobis.*

### ADORATION

Let us adore our Lord's love for St. John. Jesus indeed loves all men, for he gave his life to redeem them. Every one of us may say with St. Paul: *Dilexit me.*<sup>1</sup> In a special manner, he loved the apostles, whom he instructed in his doctrine, whom he made his confidants and companions. *Vos amici mei estis,*<sup>2</sup> he said to them.

But, among the apostles, was one whom he judged most worthy of his friendship, who was par excellence *the disciple whom Jesus loved.*<sup>3</sup>

Was he not one of the privileged three who accompanied the Master to the mount of the Transfiguration? Was it not he *who also leaned on his breast at supper?*<sup>4</sup> Was he not admitted to witness the Savior's agony in the

<sup>1</sup> GAL. 2<sup>20</sup>

<sup>2</sup> JOHN 15<sup>14</sup>

<sup>3</sup> JOHN 21<sup>20</sup>

<sup>4</sup> JOHN 21<sup>20</sup>

garden? Did not the crucified Lord show him a supreme mark of love by substituting the disciple in his own place beside his Mother from whom he was about to be separated by death?

How pure and holy and divine was our Lord's friendship for St. John. It is a lofty type of the friendship that should reign among Christians. Let us rejoice with this disciple in his being Christ's privileged apostle. Let us ask him to obtain for us the grace to love our Lord as he did.

### CONSIDERATIONS

Christ poured a threefold treasure of purity, truth, and charity into the heart of St. John.

1. *A treasure of purity.* Jesus is purity and holiness itself, in which he desires his disciples to share. He loves men's souls in the proportion of their purity. Virgins are the choice portion of his Church. His blessed Mother was a virgin. Virginal also was St. Joseph his foster-father. His priests must practice a life of continence. By such, we are told in Holy Writ, he is surrounded in glory. *These are they who were not defiled with women; for*

*they are virgins. These follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.*<sup>1</sup>

To St. John, destined to be the beloved disciple God must have imparted the gift of purity. Even before he called him to be his disciple Christ had kept him free from all worldly and carnal affection, and, by the gift of purity, had formed in this beloved disciple, a friend worthy of him. *Jesus loved him, says St Jerome, because his chastity had made him worthy of a greater love.*<sup>2</sup> Because John's soul was a mirror of purity, Christ entrusted to him Mary his mother.

*In cruce moriturus, huic matrem suam virginem virgini commendavit.*<sup>3</sup>

St. John's treasure of purity must have been enriched by his privileged association with the divine Master. *Virgo a Deo electus, virgo in ævum permansit.*<sup>4</sup>

2. *A treasure of truth. Blessed are the clean of heart: for they shall see God.*<sup>5</sup> Purity of heart best disposed the soul to receive the heavenly light of God's truth. So the teaching of Christ easily penetrated the vir-

<sup>1</sup> APOC. 14<sup>1</sup>

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> MATTH. 5<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> *Contra Jovinianum*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

ginal soul of this apostle. And he has transmitted to us that resplendent light. In fact, his writings are characterized by unique depth and sublimity.

None other of the evangelists has shed so much light on the Christian dogmas. He is the most eloquent interpreter of our mysteries. His symbol, the eagle, expresses the loftiness of the heights to which he rose. What words have ever come from the pen of man equal in sublimity to the opening verses of St. John's Gospel? Where, in the whole range of the inspired books, can we find the doctrine of the Incarnation more clearly formulated than in his brief statement: *Verbum caro factum est*?

With unfailing memory and wonderful exactness he has recorded the words of his Master, in particular the sublime discourse after the last Supper. Even the future has no secrets for the beloved disciple. Divine revelation laid open to him the destinies of the Church: her struggles, her persecutions, and her final triumph in glory.

St. John model of purity was chosen on that account, as the intermediary by whom our Lord transmitted his doctrine to us. He is



thus the type of contemplation, which, freeing itself from the slow deductions of science attains to an intuitive knowledge of truth.

3. *A treasure of charity.* Our Lord himself had said that he came to enkindle a fire on earth, a fire of love. All the mysteries of his life were inspired by this love. We do not doubt that his privileged disciple, who enjoyed so great a share of his favors, also shared, in a large measure, this treasure of divine love. In fact, he was the apostle of love.

His faithful love for Christ did not abandon him during the hours of his Master's passion. At the first word of the resurrection, love hastened his steps to the sepulchre. When the Lord appeared to the disciples on the lake shore, it was this love that made St. John recognize him before any of the others: *It is the Lord*, he cried. Inspired by love, he preached the Gospel of Christ, founded numerous churches, suffered exile and, although he did not meet death by the sword, he was none the less a martyr of Christ.

When our Lord entrusted his blessed Mother to the care of St. John, he also gave that disciple the heart of a son. St. John, then, taking the place of Christ, loved Mary as no

other son ever loved his mother. *Accepit eam in sua.*<sup>1</sup>

He could not so ardently love Christ without being consumed with the Master's love for souls. Hence his long life was devoted to works of zeal for the salvation of men.

Who was better qualified to write of love? It is he who tells us: *Deus caritas est.*<sup>2</sup> Charity is a word that repeatedly comes from his pen. In fact, it is the subject of all his exhortations. His writings all have the accent, the language of holy love.

### ACTS AND RESOLUTIONS

We, too, like St. John, are called to the priestly dignity. We, too, should possess the threefold treasure of purity, truth, and love. Without the virtue of purity, how would we be worthy to treat the sacred mysteries confided to us, to ascend the altar of God, to administer his sacraments?

Since we are to be preachers and interpreters of divine truth, we should possess it abundantly. God will place his word on my lips. Mine will be the duty of instructing the

<sup>1</sup> JOHN 19<sup>27</sup>

<sup>2</sup> I JOHN 4<sup>16</sup>

ignorant, of showing to all the path that leads to God. The necessary knowledge is of strictest obligation.

And charity—is it not the great priestly virtue? Is not the life of a priest a continual giving of himself and, therefore, an unceasing act of charity? What is zeal but the highest expression of charity? Without this virtue, how could I represent Christ among men?

When Our Lord so abundantly enriched St. John's soul with the virtue of charity, it was not merely for his apostle's sake, but likewise for all who are favored with Christ's friendship. My priesthood will make me a privileged friend of Christ.

Do thou, beloved disciple of Christ, ask our Lord to fill my heart with treasures of purity, truth, and love; ask that I may ever be his faithful friend, corresponding with the grace of my vocation.

I resolve:

1. To weed out from my heart whatever may diminish its purity;

2. Through the intercession of St. John, to pray for the light I need in learning the divine truths that are the subject of my studies;

3. To renew my love for Christ, for his blessed Mother, and for his Church.

*Sancte Joannes, discipule quem diligebat  
Jesus, ora pro nobis.*

## XVI. ST. PETER'S CHAIR AT ROME

### SUMMARY

I. We will adore Our Lord in heaven receiving the homage of angels and saints. Thence, he also governs his Church. We will adore him exercising his authority in the person of the sovereign pontiffs.

II. We will see that the Chair of St. Peter is worthy of our respect for a threefold reason.

1. *Because of its solidity.* In the Gospel, Our Lord promised St. Peter that the Church, of which he made him the head, would resist everything. We see the fulfillment of this prophecy. Thrones fall but the Chair of St. Peter ever remains standing.

2. *Because of its excellent prerogatives.* Its authority is infinitely above all other authority on earth. It was founded by Christ. Its authority is not confined to any part of the earth. It rules over souls, without exterior force, it obtains the obedience of the heart.

3. *Because of the majesty of the pontiffs who have occupied it.* What a glorious line of saints, men of learning, and eminent Popes!

III. We will thank Our Lord for having always protected his Church and the see of Peter. We will recall, especially today, how we should be devoted with all our heart to the Holy See.

We will resolve:

1. To pray often for the Pope;

2. To show ourselves ever loyal and submissive to him.

*Thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

### ADORATION

Let us, in thought, visit the court of heaven. Let us adore the incarnate Word. *Dixit Dominus Domino meo: Sede a dextris meis.*<sup>1</sup>

Says St. John in his Apocalypse: *From the throne proceeded lightnings, and voice and thunders; and there were seven lamps burning before the throne . . . . The four and twenty ancients fell down before him that sitteth on the throne, and adored him that liveth for ever and ever and cast their crowns before the throne, saying; Thou art worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory and honor and power.*<sup>2</sup>

There, it is that Christ receives the homage of heaven. Thence he also governs his Church, defends it, enlighten it, and sanctifies it. *Christus vincit, regnat, imperat.* There too, he pronounces irrevocable judgment upon both good and wicked. *For the Father . . . . hath given all judgment to the Son.*<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> PS. 109<sup>1</sup>

<sup>2</sup> APOC. 4<sup>5</sup>, 10

<sup>3</sup> JOHN 5<sup>22</sup>

Let us adore our Lord also exercising his authority, in the person of his vicar, on the throne of Peter, established at Rome almost nineteen hundred years ago. There the divine head of the Church reigns with glory, receives the homage of the universe, utters his oracles, and points out to men the way that leads to God.

Let us pay honor to our Lord, living in the Sovereign Pontiffs, and let us unite with the faithful throughout the world in respect, love, and obedience towards that venerable see, the foundation and pillar of Catholic truth.

### CONSIDERATIONS

Let us consider the solidity, the prerogatives, and the majesty of Peter's see at Rome.

1. *Its solidity.* Its indefectibility is clearly foretold by our Lord himself. *Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona: because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in heaven. And I say to thee: That thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*<sup>1</sup>

Such was the promise; history records its fulfillment.

<sup>1</sup> MATTH. 16<sup>17-18</sup>

From chairs of learning, great philosophers have taught; but they have passed away and the voice of their authority has faded into silence.

The thrones of mighty dynasties have taken the place of other thrones, only to be overthrown and replaced in turn. The history of the world is a succession of such revolutions.

Amidst these changes, surrounded by ruin heaped upon ruin, the chair of Peter alone enjoys the glorious privilege of perpetuity. Many storms have risen up against it; hell has enlisted enemies against it. Against the violence of persecution, it has had to struggle as well as against the encroachments of a secular protection more dangerous than a tyrant's hate. Schism, heresy, the corruption of laxity have all tried to overthrow it. Despite all this, the chair of Peter has retained its incomparable majesty, and the Sovereign Pontiff continues to exercise his mild and peaceful authority. Not unlike this will be the history of future ages.

It is from the see of Peter that the Church derives its enduring solidity. *Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*<sup>1</sup> This truth has

<sup>1</sup> MATTH. 16<sup>18</sup>



been more manifestly set forth by the definition of papal infallibility in the Vatican Council.

2. *The prerogatives of Peter's see.* Its authority is infinitely above all other authority on earth.

There is nothing in the world greater than the priesthood; and in the priesthood the papacy is supreme. We find its origin in Christ himself, who founded it and to it communicated that unlimited plenitude of power which he received from the heavenly Father; so that St. Peter and his successors are the vicars of Christ on earth, the highest expression of his priesthood and divine prerogatives. The Popes' authority, therefore, is the very authority of the incarnate Word living and abiding in their person.

It is, moreover, not confined to any part of the earth. To St. Peter's successor, all are subject: bishops as well as the simple faithful, kings no less than their humblest subjects. In short, all who have received the sacred character of baptism.

Whereas temporal sovereigns have a certain authority over the bodies of their subjects, that of the papacy extends to men's souls; it

affects, not the interest of time, but those of eternity.

The kings of the earth must often depend upon brutal force in executing their laws. But the successors of Peter have no armies to enforce their decrees; for what they require is a free and voluntary obedience. This they obtain solely by the efficacy of their word.

Their authority even requires that men submit their reason to the judgments which they pass. In fact, their solemn pronouncements in the domain of faith are infallible, like those of God himself.

3. *The majesty of Peter's see* has been adorned by a succession of holy Pontiffs. During the first three centuries, we have an unbroken succession of Popes, all shedding their blood for the name of Christ. Their elevation to the supreme authority was followed by the confession of their faith in prison, in exile, on the gibbet.

When peace came to the Church, the see of Peter was occupied by men of great learning, such as St. Leo, St. Gregory the Great, Benedict XIV.

Others, by word and example, rekindled the zeal of pastors and the faith of the people.

Their firmness and spirit of faith served to check laxity of discipline or decadence of morals. We have noteworthy examples in St. Nicholas I, St. Gregory VII, and Innocent III.

Nothing could reflect more glory on the Holy See than the lives of those saintly Popes who practiced humility in a position of supreme authority and poverty in the midst of riches. These pontiffs have given us the example of a truly priestly life.

#### ACTS AND RESOLUTIONS

Thou it is, my Saviour, who gavest the see of Peter to the Church as its foundation; and thou hast sustained and defended it. Thou, too, hast raised up so many illustrious Popes, the honor and consolation of the Church. Hence, I will always revere the Holy See and be ever ready to defend it. It will soon be my duty to impress upon others the respect and love they owe the Holy See, to point out in the Sovereign Pontiff the father of their souls, the vicar of Christ. My own attitude, therefore, should be one of filial devotion.

I ask thee, my Lord, to strengthen these dispositions in me. Grant that in the person

of thy vicar, I may always see and honor thee. May I never entertain any thought or utter any word contrary to him and his decrees.

I resolve:

1. To pray often for the Pope;
2. To show myself ever loyal and submissive to him.

*Thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> MATTH. 16<sup>18</sup>

## XVII. THE CONVERSION OF ST. PAUL

### SUMMARY

- I. We will adore our Lord reigning in heaven. One of the most astounding miracles performed by him was the conversion of St. Paul. We will thank our Lord for this miracle; and we will congratulate the apostle in the choice God made of him.
- II. We will see how the power of grace appeared in the conversion of St. Paul, by considering three things.

1. *St. Paul before his conversion.* The grace of conversion was not the result of a long gradual process. Blinded by prejudices, he nourished a great hatred for Christianity; he pursued the followers of Christ and wished to annihilate them.

2. *The manner of St. Paul's conversion.* Contrary to what ordinarily happens, the action of grace was: 1. direct and not under the action of secondary causes; 2. instantaneous; 3. miraculous.

3. *The effects of St. Paul's conversion.* An ardent zeal burns in the apostle's heart. He desires to bring the light of the gospel to all people. He writes epistles to the faithful or to his disciples which we cannot tire from admiring.

- III. We will recall that like St. Paul we can say: *By the grace of God, I am what I am.* We will humble ourselves for not being able to add: *His grace in me has not been void.*

We will resolve to correspond with all the graces that God now bestows upon us.

*Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?*

### ADORATION

*Christum regem adoremus dominantem gentibus.*<sup>1</sup> The chief instrument of his power is grace, a mysterious force possessing both mildness and powerful energy. By means of it, Christ subdues rebellious wills, softens hardened hearts, enlightens the mind, and establishes his kingdom of souls. How many prodigies of conversion and holiness it has produced! The lives of the saints are the work of grace aiding human nature, elevating it and making it capable of the noblest deeds.

In the early days of the Church its operation was strikingly manifested. But its power was never more evident than in the conversion of St. Paul, so suddenly transformed from a bitter persecutor of the Church to its most zealous apostle. To the minds of many, this astounding revelation of God's power seems enough to demonstrate the truth of our holy religion. To keep this mighty event fresh in our memory the Church has placed this feast in her calendar.

<sup>1</sup> *Invitatorium Festi Corp. Christi*

Let us thank our Lord for this miracle, for the treasures of doctrine and holiness with which he filled St. Paul's soul, that they might be communicated to the whole world.

Let us rejoice that we possess in St. Paul a perfect model of that apostolic zeal that will, we pray, ever urge us on to the conquest of souls. *This man is to me a vessel of election, to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel.*<sup>1</sup>

### CONSIDERATIONS

Let us consider what St. Paul was before his conversion, how his conversion was wrought, and what were its effects.

1. *St. Paul before his conversion.* As the previous dispositions of a soul generally prepare for the action of divine grace, so its effects are usually not at all striking or surprising. Most conversions, even the more notable ones, take place in this way.

When St. Augustine gave himself to God, he had long been struggling against himself and his passions; his mind was being

<sup>1</sup> ACTS 9<sup>15</sup>

enlightened; his will had to overcome only a remnant of feebleness.

When our Lord called his apostles, there were no great obstacles for his grace to surmount. They were simple souls, not blinded by passion and they experienced no difficulty in yielding to the action of the Holy Spirit.

But the case of St. Paul was quite different. In him, everything was an obstacle to the reception of God's light. For he was a Pharisee, proud of his learning, blinded by the prejudices of a sect that had been the most obstinate adversary of Christ. He had vowed a mortal hatred for Christianity, in which, he saw only the annihilation of Israel's national and religious traditions. He says himself: *I was a blasphemer and a persecutor.*<sup>1</sup>

The deacon Stephen was one of his first victims. *And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man, whose name was Saul . . . . And Saul was consenting to his death.*<sup>2</sup>

Pitilessly, he pursued the followers of Christ, arrested them and had them put in chains. *Saul made havoc of the Church, entering in from*

<sup>1</sup> I TIM. 1<sup>13</sup>

<sup>2</sup> ACTS 7<sup>57, 59</sup>



*house to house, and dragging away men and women, committed them to prison.*<sup>1</sup>

Damascus, the capital of Syria, contained a number of Christians who had, perhaps, fled from the persecution at Jerusalem. Saul set out for that city, *that if he found any men and women of this way, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.*<sup>2</sup>

Such were his dispositions which were to be suddenly and miraculously changed by God's grace.

2. *The manner of St. Paul's conversion.* Ordinarily, the workings of grace are hidden by the action of created causes; it may be a sermon, a good book, some overwhelming trial. Besides, rarely is the effect instantaneous, God following generally a gradual process, as he does in the works of nature. And, lastly, he helps and strengthens the natural powers but does not work miracles.

But in the conversion of St. Paul, grace acted directly, instantaneously, and miraculously.

Its action was *direct*. It is the voice of Jesus that he hears as he falls to the ground on the road to Damascus. *Saul, Saul, why per-*

<sup>1</sup> ACTS 8<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> ACTS 9<sup>2</sup>

*secutest thou me?*<sup>1</sup> At the same time, a sudden light illumined his soul and the unction of grace penetrated his heart.

The grace of his conversion acted *instantaneously*. The persecutor had fallen to the ground; he arose an apostle. Instantly his mind is enlightened, his heart is changed. There is no hesitation. No sooner does grace speak than, without the slightest opposition, he cries: *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?*<sup>2</sup> Christ has become the master of this proud soul. *The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars: yea, the Lord shall break the cedars of Lebanon.*<sup>3</sup>

In this conversion, the grace of God acted *miraculously*. The heavenly apparition, the Lord's voice, the dazzling light—these were indeed a great prodigy. But what took place in the soul of Saul was still more astounding.

Not only does he become Christ's disciple, not only does he give himself to the Lord without reserve, but his soul, transformed in a moment, rises to the highest degree of sanctity. Henceforth, as St. John Chrysostom says, *Cor Pauli cor erat Christi.*<sup>4</sup>

Moreover, without the aid of any other

<sup>1</sup> ACTS 9<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> ACTS 9<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> PS. 28<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> *De laud. B. Pauli*

teacher, he is at once instructed in all the doctrine of the Gospel. *For neither did I receive it of man, nor did I learn it; but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.*<sup>1</sup>

3. *The effects of St. Paul's conversion.* God's purpose in his conversion was not merely the apostle's sanctification. To set forth the result of this marvelous conversion would require us to recall the whole life of the Doctor of the Gentiles, his journeys, his preaching, the persecutions and perils he encountered, the conversion of the world as the fruit of his labors. He was, indeed, a chosen instrument that God employed to carry his name to distant peoples.

These apostolic missions of St. Paul covered at least thirty years. We are unable to calculate the multitudes of Jews and Gentiles he converted and the number of churches he founded. Truly could he compare himself with the other apostles, saying, *I have labored more abundantly than all they.*<sup>2</sup>

In his letters, he has left us a priceless treasure of doctrine, a testimony of his consuming love for Christ and for souls.

The whole apostolic life of St. Paul is the

<sup>1</sup> GAL. 1<sup>12</sup>

<sup>2</sup> I COR. 15<sup>10</sup>

work of God's grace. He himself affirms it; *By the grace of God, I am what I am.*<sup>1</sup> How wonderful must be God's grace to produce such effects!

### ACTS AND RESOLUTIONS

Thy grace, O my God, has lost none of its power. Thou hast called me to become a minister of thy grace, and its instrument. Thou wouldst have me now transformed and sanctified under its influence so that I, too, may be an apostle fired with zeal and eager to labor for thee.

May I not say, as did St. Paul, *By the grace of God, I am what I am?* Did not grace call me to God's service, does it not enlighten my mind, strengthen me in my weakness, raise me up from my falls? Is it not grace that now helps me to develop Christian virtues, to resist temptation, to grow more perfect?

But have I corresponded generously to God's grace, as St. Paul did? Can I say with him, *His grace in me hath not been void?*<sup>2</sup> On the contrary, have I not rather deserved, by my abuse and neglect of grace, that God should

<sup>1</sup> I COR. 15<sup>10</sup>

<sup>2</sup> I COR. 15<sup>10</sup>

withdraw it from me? Merciful Lord, help me to be ever faithful to thy grace, never leave me without its powerful help.

I resolve to correspond with all the graces that God now bestows upon me.

*Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> ACTS 9<sup>6</sup>

## XVIII. ST. FRANCIS DE SALES

### SUMMARY

I. We will adore our Lord living in his saints. We will honor the abundance of those heavenly gifts in the soul of St. Francis de Sales and we will recall the many motives which oblige us to have a special devotion to him.

II. We will apply to St. Francis de Sales the words which the Holy Ghost said of Moses:

1. *Beloved of God and men.* If many of the saints appear to us with a grave and austere aspect, St. Francis de Sales is above all the expression of amiability. He is always succeeding in making himself loved. Even his writings give testimony of the goodness of his heart.

2. *He made him like the saints in glory.* The life of the saint offers us examples of great sacrifices; yet the excellence of his sanctity consists chiefly in the perfection with which he did everything, and that with a natural and admirable simplicity. What must have been the perfection of his interior life which inspired all his acts!

3. *He magnified him in the fear of his enemies.* He opposed heresy and combatted it by his preaching and books. God blessed his efforts. The saint made religion flourish again in entire countries.

III. We will recall that the life of St. Francis de Sales should be admired, but especially imitated, more-

over that everything in this life is a model of the perfection which we are bound to attain.

We will resolve to cultivate the unfailing meekness of St. Francis.

*He sanctified him in his faith and meekness.*

### ADORATION

Let us adore our Lord living in his saints, manifesting in them a reflection of his divine perfections and thus making it easier for us to imitate him. In the life and writings of St. Francis de Sales, we have choicest fruit of nature and grace; he is a perfect type of virtuous Christian, priest, apostle, and bishop.

Let us recognize God as the author of those abundant gifts and talents that enriched the whole life of St. Francis: the wholesome Christian influences that surrounded his childhood, the chastity of his youth, fidelity to his vocation, a fruitful priesthood, an episcopate manifestly filled with God's blessings.

### CONSIDERATIONS

The Holy Ghost says of Moses: *beloved of God and men: whose memory is in benediction. He made him like the saints in glory and magnified him in the fear of his enemies.*<sup>1</sup> Let us

<sup>1</sup> ECCLUS. 45<sup>1</sup>

apply these words of praise to the life of St. Francis.

1. *Beloved of God and men.* Many of the saints exhibit the grave, austere, majestic aspect of holiness, inspiring a deep religious respect. Such were St. Athanasius, St. Basil, St. Ambrose, St. Martin, St. Charles Borromeo.

The dominant trait of St. Francis de Sales, however, is amiability. In him, the dignity of priest and bishop is tempered by gentleness of manner. It seems that God wished to give us in this saint an image of his own mildness and mercy. His acts, his words, both spoken and written, bear the same mark.

Everyone could approach him, assured of a kindly reception. The rich and the poor, the great and the lowly had ready access to his person. In fact, he was the confident of their misfortunes and griefs.

We are even told that few men who met him did not really love him. This trait of amiability, no doubt, partly accounts for the surprising success of his ministry. And this prestige still endures in the memory of him. Whenever we read his life, we feel ourselves attracted to him. His writings, particularly



his letters, at each reading of them possess a new charm for us.

2. *He made him like the saints in glory.* The life of this pious bishop was heroic, containing many acts of sublime virtue and self-denial. In this respect, he is not surpassed by even the most illustrious saints.

Yet his sanctity consisted chiefly in the perfection with which he did everything. In vain do we look for defects or imperfections in his life.

Prudence, moderation, discretion preside over his every deed. With nice carefulness he avoids both precipitate haste and neglectful delay. Yet this balance of his character did not exclude a natural and charming simplicity in his manner.

If the very expression of his countenance bore the mark of holiness, what must have been the perfection of his interior life. Although he experienced joy and sorrow, although he understood the warmth of friendship, still the love of God rules his soul. He sees God in everything, in the mighty ones of earth, in his friends, in the poor. Even to the smallest details of his life he imparts an inimitable

touch of holiness. And this practice of perfection in everything, even the commonest acts, he never tires recommending to others.

3. *He magnified him in the fear of his enemies.* At the time he was called to the ministry of souls, heresy was rampant. Part of the flock later confided to him had contracted the new errors of Protestantism. Geneva and Berne had disastrously influenced the neighboring country.

St. Francis de Sales was, so to speak, one of the dykes that God raised up to stem the flood of the so-called reformation. Equipped with profound knowledge, with the divine power of apostolic zeal, and especially with irresistible gentleness, he undertook to combat the errors and to lead back to the Church those souls that heresy had violently separated from it.

God blessed his efforts. For he had the consolation of converting whole districts to the true faith. Thus he became the rampart of the Catholic faith; but at the price of what labor and fatigue, of what dangers! To understand the astonishing success of his efforts, we need to read in his life the narrative of those brilliant missionary exploits that

placed him in the rank of the Church's most illustrious apostles.

St. Francis was, then, the fear of heretics. So victoriously did he fight against their errors, so clearly did he expose their sophisms, that no adversary ventured to enter the list against him. *God magnified him in the fear of his enemies.*

## ACTS AND RESOLUTIONS

The life of St. Francis de Sales is a model of that priestly perfection to which we are called by our vocation. It is true that all the saints are set up for our imitation. But the holiness of this Bishop of Geneva was so eminently suited to our imitation. In his writings, he sets before us the rules of the perfect life, and he exemplifies them in his life. Sublime virtues are revealed to us in acts so simple and natural, we might almost say so common, that we are encouraged to imitate them.

How much glory would be given to God, how many sinners converted, how many lukewarm souls made fervent if every priest's life were modeled on that of St. Francis!

I will renew my acquaintance with the details

of his life. I will read his spiritual writings often again, and ask him to obtain from God for me the grace to be like him pure and holy in my affections, amiable and kind in my dealings with others, devout in my religious exercises, perfect in everything.

I resolve to cultivate the unfailing kindness of St. Francis.

*He sanctified him in his faith and meekness.<sup>1</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> ECCLUS. 45<sup>1</sup>



## XIX

### ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

#### SUMMARY

I. We will adore the incarnate Word of God in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. We will thank God for the abundance of divine science he communicated to St. Thomas.

II. We will consider how St. Thomas prepared for study, how he applied himself to it, and how he made use of the knowledge derived therefrom.

1. *How St. Thomas prepared for study.* He prepared in a two-fold way: by purity of heart, which enabled him to sound the depths of God's mysteries; and by prayer, which he preferred above all things.

2. *How he applied himself.* St. Thomas studied ardently. He united extensive reading with deep reflection. He knew how to economize time.

3. *How he made use of the knowledge.* He did not seek human glory. He had only one end: to combat the enemies of Christ, explain revealed doctrine, and thus procure God's glory.

III. We will call to mind that God wishes us to acquire a knowledge of Scripture and Theology. We will ask ourselves if we, like St. Thomas, have prepared ourselves for study, applied ourselves, and pursued the same end.

We will resolve:

1. To seek the aid of the Holy Ghost in all our studies;
2. To apply ourselves more diligently to the duty of study;

*Lucere tantum vanum, ardere tantum parum,  
ardere et lucere perfectum.*

## I. ADORATION

Let us adore the incarnate Word of God *in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*<sup>1</sup> He is *the true light, which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world.*<sup>2</sup> In the order of nature, he illumines man's reason; in that of grace, he produces faith; in the order of glory he is, according to St. John, the light of the city of God. *Lucerna ejus est Agnus.*<sup>3</sup> From him, it is that the doctors of the Church have drawn their great learning.

Let us thank God for the abundance of divine science that he communicated to St. Thomas Aquinas, whose feast we celebrate to-day. The sublimity of his teaching no less than his lofty holiness has gained for him

<sup>1</sup> COLOSS. 2<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> APOC. 21<sup>23</sup>

<sup>3</sup> JOHN 1<sup>9</sup>

the glorious title of angelic Doctor or the Angel of the School. In the products of the human mind, where else can we find the height and depth and extent of knowledge manifest in his numerous writings? By the universality of his genius, he won the admiration of his contemporaries and added lustre to the Order of St. Dominic. The six centuries that have since elapsed have in no wise diminished that reputation. On the contrary, his glory seems to have increased. St. Thomas is the theologian par excellence. The most brilliant minds feel honored in being his disciples. His writings, in fact, with the various commentaries based thereon, have become the basis of our theological teaching. Pope Leo XIII has confirmed this tribute by proclaiming him the patron of Catholic schools.

Let us thank our Lord for having given such a light to his Church. And let us ask for the grace to strive after theological knowledge, which we need since we are, some day, to be the light of the world and the salt of the earth.

## II. CONSIDERATIONS

Let us consider how St. Thomas prepared for study, how he applied himself to it, and

how he made use of the knowledge derived therefrom.

1. *How St. Thomas prepared for study;* by purity of heart and by prayer.

*Purity of heart* was in him as conspicuous as knowledge. By a signal victory he obtained from God the gift of perfect chastity, preserving him from those painful and humiliating temptations from which even the holiest souls have not been exempt. His mind, therefore, was not clouded by inordinate affections. *Blessed are the clean of heart: for they shall see God.*<sup>1</sup> The purity of his heart enabled him to sound the depths of God's mysteries and to contemplate the beauty of his works.

*Prayer.* While still a disciple of the Blessed Albert the Great, he devoted several hours every day to conversing with God in prayer so as to obtain an understanding of what he was taught. Later on, when he himself became teacher, he employed the same means to make his studies fruitful. Never did he put his pen to paper without spending some time imploring light from God. He likewise found the daily celebration of the holy sacri-

<sup>1</sup> MATT. 5<sup>8</sup>



fice a source of light in the mysteries of theology. One day, while dictating his *Commentaries on St. Paul*, he found difficulty in understanding some obscure passage; but, after having recourse to prayer, he found the mist removed. Another time, after he had prayed and fasted to obtain the understanding of a certain text in Isaias, its meaning was miraculously unveiled to him. To a fellow-religious he said that he had learned more in his oratory at the foot of the crucifix and by meditating upon the wonders of God's goodness, than by study and by turning over the pages of books.

2. *How St. Thomas applied himself to study.* To the supernatural means of prayer, St. Thomas added those of work and study. In fact, he studied as ardently as if his whole success depended on it. A mere glance at his writings is sufficient to convince us of this fact. Throughout his labor and industry are evident; extensive reading and deep reflection. It is not the prophet's infused knowledge nor that of the inspired authors that comes without effort. It is a personal work, the fruit of long hours of patient research, a storehouse of carefully elaborated erudition.

To study he consecrated all his time not devoted to prayer. Though possessed of a happy memory, a keen and penetrating mind, a prodigious facility for acquiring knowledge, yet, for all that, he did not dispense with the close application that the work exacted.

St. Thomas was not only a man of great intellect, he was a man of serious and profound study, study pursued with constant patience and courage.

He died when fifty years old. Although in that short time he had taught in several universities, exercised the ministry of the word, undertaken, for the glory of God, many long voyages, yet, by persistent activity, by a methodical economy of fragmentary moments, he was able to compose an almost incredible number of learned books; one of them alone, the *Summa Theologica*, might well have occupied the longest life. Such was the prodigy made possible by constant application to study. What a model for us.

3. *What use St. Thomas made of his knowledge.* One day, while he was praying before the crucifix, he went into ecstacy; the crucified Savior spoke to him: *Bene scripsisti de me, Thoma; quam mercedem accipies?* To which he answered: *Non aliam nisi te, Domine.*

The learning of St. Thomas was not, then, that haughty knowledge which puffs up the mind, which fills it with a high opinion of itself, self-complacently seeking human glory. In the pursuit of sacred science, St. Thomas had only one end in view: to combat the enemies of Christ, explain revealed doctrine, and thus procure God's glory while defending our holy faith.

Although in his own life-time he was considered the greatest genius of the age, neither the familiar confidence of the King of France, St. Louis nor the applause of the most celebrated universities could incite his pride. He ever remained a simple monk, humble and obedient.

We are not surprised, therefore, that he refused the ecclesiastical dignities to which the Sovereign Pontiff wished to call him. His humility led him to acknowledge that all he had came from God, to whom he attributed all the glory.

#### ACTS AND RESOLUTIONS

It is thy will, my God, that I should, by serious study, seek to acquire a deep knowledge of Scripture and Theology. In fact, this is one of my chief duties.

But has my fidelity to study been a worthy

imitation of the great St. Thomas? Have I always begun with a prayer to the Holy Ghost and do I have recourse to prayer especially when I meet with difficulties?

Am I inclined to neglect such studies as I find dry or uninteresting in order to devote my time to more agreeable subjects, to frivolous reading or profitless dreaming.

Instead of considering my knowledge as a means of serving the Church, of glorifying God and saving souls, have I become puffed up at my little successes, have I sought to shine before others, have I by exaggeration affected to know things of which I am really ignorant?

Through the intercession of St. Thomas, grant me the grace to apply myself to study eagerly, with dependence and reliance on the help of thy Holy Spirit, and for purely supernatural ends.

I resolve:

1. To seek the aid of the Holy Ghost in all my studies;
2. To apply myself more diligently to the duty of study;

*Lucere tantum vanum, ardere tantum parum, ardere et lucere perfectum.*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> ST. BERNARD, *In Nativ. Joan. Bapt.*

## XX

### ST. JOSEPH

#### SUMMARY

- I. We will contemplate with joy the extraordinary honors paid to St. Joseph. The saints have made known his glory and his virtues and made his cult very popular. The Sovereign Pontiff has proclaimed him patron of the universal church. We will join in the praises and especially in the testimonies of veneration which St. Joseph received from Jesus and Mary.
- II. We will see that St. Joseph is the model for good priests in three respects:
1. *The preparation for his mission.* Predestined to coöperate in the mystery of the Incarnation, St. Joseph was the object of divine vocation. He was preserved from evil and adorned with every virtue. The priest is also called by God for a great work and is endowed with the blessings of God.
  2. *The accomplishment of his mission.* He watches over the divine Infant, supports him by his labor, guards him from the hatred of his enemies, and loves him with a fatherly love. The priest fulfills these same duties towards souls and lives only for them.
  3. *His death.* The death of this holy patriarch was not one of grief. By his bedside were Mary,

engrossed in prayer, and Jesus holding the head of the dying. The death of the good priest is accompanied with this peace and these consolations.

III. We will ask ourselves if we are preparing at the seminary to accomplish our mission in a perfect way. We will humble ourselves because of our failings. We will ask St. Joseph for the grace of generosity.

We will resolve:

1. Often to seek the graces we need through the intercession of St. Joseph.

2. To confide especially to him the matter of our vocation.

*Glory and wealth shall be in his house: and his justice remaineth for ever and ever.*

## ADORATION

Let us rejoice that the Holy Ghost has inspired the Church to pay such extraordinary honors to St. Joseph. For centuries, the eminent glory that he received in heaven had scarcely any echo on earth.

The devotion to St. Joseph, which began in the eastern Church, gradually spread through the West. Some religious orders introduced the celebration of his feast; soon the Roman Church sanctioned it, adopted it herself, established it as a feast of the universal Church, and has placed it among the holy days of

obligation. Many faithful servants of God have become known for their devotion to St. Joseph and their confidence in his intercession. Among them we may name St. Francis de Sales, St. Theresa, Fr. Olier.

It was not long before churches and altars were erected in his honor. Religious orders, sodalities, parishes, seminaries, colleges, institutions of all sorts have been placed under the patronage of his name.

What has the Church left undone to instill into her children the greatest possible esteem and the deepest reverence for the glorious spouse of Mary? The Sovereign Pontiff has proclaimed him the patron of the universal Church. Throughout the Catholic world, therefore, he will to-day receive special honor, unnumbered prayers will be addressed to him, and from Christian pulpits his virtues and his greatness will be exalted.

Let us add the voice of our praise to the harmony of homage that will to-day arise from all corners of the world in honor of this great patron.

### CONSIDERATIONS

Although St. Joseph did not receive the sacerdotal character, yet between his mission

and that which the priesthood will confer upon us there is a striking analogy. Let us consider this mission in its preparation, its accomplishment, and its reward.

1. *The preparation.* The signal honor of being the spouse of the Blessed Virgin and the foster-father of Christ was the result of a divine vocation. From all eternity, God, decreeing the incarnation of his Word and predestining Mary to be his mother, likewise, predestined St. Joseph to coöperate in this great mystery.

To be worthy of such a heavenly service, St. Joseph must needs possess the virtues of saintliness in an eminent degree. He had, indeed, to be enriched with the gifts of nature as also those of grace. No man was to surpass him nor even to equal him in purity, humility, and self-denial.

From God, St. Joseph received incomparable graces that were accorded to no other saint in the same degree. While preserving him from evil, God also adorned his soul with all virtues. *Justum deduxit per vias rectas, et ostendit illi regnum Dei.*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> WIS. 10<sup>10</sup>



Is there not a like providence presiding over the preparation of a priest? He, too, has a divine vocation. Him has God picked out from the midst of multitudes to entrust him with the dispensation of his mysteries. *He chose him out of all men living, to offer sacrifice to God.*<sup>1</sup> To him God addresses an eternal decree: *Tu es sacerdos.*<sup>2</sup>

The graces that the priest will need in corresponding to his vocation have not been lacking; for God, who called him, prepared these graces for him. It is he who planted in the heart of his chosen one that desire to become a priest, he who so combined circumstances that they would be favorable to its development, he who overcame obstacles and warded off dangers.

2. *The accomplishment.* To St. Joseph, God entrusts the guardianship of his divine Son. He must watch over him, guard him from the hatred of his enemies, support his life by the toil of his hands. To him, will St. Joseph consecrate his life. The thought of Jesus will sweeten all the labor and sacrifices. He will consider himself more happy in pov-

<sup>1</sup> ECCLU. 45<sup>20</sup>

<sup>2</sup> PS. 109<sup>4</sup>

erty with Jesus than if he possessed all the riches of the earth.

Such also is the life of a good priest. God confides the children of the Church to him as he confided the infant Savior to St. Joseph. His mission in the world is to devote himself to their instruction and sanctification, to develop the life of Christ in them. He must direct them during life and open the gates of a blessed eternity for them.

To this divine ministry, a good priest will devote himself with the unstinted zeal of his whole heart. Christ was everything for St. Joseph. Immortal souls will be everything for a true priest. He lives only for them; to them he consecrates all his time, without reserve. When they go astray, he is saddened; his joy is to see them walk in the way of God. He is ever ready to repeat the words of St. Paul: *I most gladly will spend and be spent myself for your souls.*<sup>1</sup>

3. *In its close.* The earthly mission of St. Joseph was at a close. The time was at hand for him to receive an unending reward. In his death, there is nothing to grieve his soul,

<sup>1</sup> II COR. 12<sup>15</sup>

no shadow of fear. On the contrary, it is a moment of supreme earthly joy and hope.

By a like death, a good priest closes his life. Jesus and Mary are there to strengthen him, to soothe his anguish, and to receive his soul. What room will there be for fear in the death of God's faithful servant? Has he not lived throughout his priestly life only for God and souls? As his eyes are closing to this world, can he not welcome the approach of the next with a spirit like unto that of the great apostle? *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. As to the rest, there is laid up for me a crown of justice, which the Lord the just judge will render to me in that day.*<sup>1</sup>

The death of a faithful priest is, therefore, full of joy and consolation. He feels no regret in quitting this life; long since he renounced worldly gratifications, and his heart is attached to nothing here below. His goal has ever been that blessed eternity, in the company of his divine Master and Friend, he will rest from his labors. If his life has been marred by some faults, he has expiated them

<sup>1</sup> II TIM. 4<sup>7</sup>

by penance. With firm confidence, then, he goes to meet the gentle Master whom he has served, for whom he has labored, who alone has been the object of his love.

### ACTS AND RESOLUTIONS

*Let my soul die the death of the just.*<sup>1</sup> But, that my death may be holy, my life must be so. If I would have the death of a good priest, I must correspond to the graces of my vocation, I must strive to acquire the virtues that my life in the priesthood will demand. Blessed Joseph, this favor I ask you to obtain for me by your intercession.

It is not enough that I recognize my vocation; I must also fulfill its duties. May my life of preparation here in the seminary be a faithful imitation of the virtues of St. Joseph.

I resolve:

1. Often to seek the graces I need through St. Joseph's intercession;
2. To confide especially to him the matter of my vocation.

*Glory and wealth shall be in his house: and his justice remaineth for ever and ever.*<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> NUM. 23<sup>10</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Ps. 111<sup>3</sup>

## XXI

### ST. MARK

#### SUMMARY

I. We will adore our Savior entrusting the sacred deposit of teaching to his evangelists. We will honor St. Mark in the work of his apostolate. We will thank our divine Master for having chosen us like him to preach the Gospel.

II. We will see that St. Mark has the triple honor of being:

1. *The historian of the Gospel.* He was the disciple of St. Peter. By the written word, he spread the knowledge of our Savior's life. The head of the apostles approved it. We, too, should write the Gospel in our hearts and show it in our works.

2. *The apostle of the Gospel.* Taking his gospel with him, St. Mark proceeded to Egypt, the land of superstition and false science. God blessed the works and efforts of his Apostle. The Church of Alexandria was a perfect model of Christian life. We shall have to evangelize countries like Egypt in the absence of all Christian ideals; let us arm ourselves, like St. Mark, with the zeal which makes apostles.

3. *The martyr of the Gospel.* St. Mark, after giving testimony to his faith, gave the testimony of his blood, since he suffered death for the Gospel. If we do not have to undergo a similar martyrdom,

at least, we shall have to undergo the martyrdom of patience in the midst of failure.

III. We will ask our Lord to give us the spirit of evangelists, apostles, and martyrs. We will humble ourselves and promise to be more generous in the future.

We will resolve to measure the importance of all our duties here in the seminary in the light of the mighty work for which they are intended to prepare us.

*Make me a pious and humble disciple . . . .  
that I may walk according to every indication of thy will.*

### ADORATION

Let us adore our Lord entrusting to his apostles and evangelists the sacred deposit of his teaching. He made them the interpreters of his doctrine and attached a marvelous power to their words. *In omnem terram exivit sonus eorum.*<sup>1</sup> By directing their pen, he became the author of those inspired writings, which the Church has preserved with such religious jealousy, for they will ever be the foundation and chief source of her teachings.

Let us, therefore, honor St. Mark, whom God elevated to the glory of the apostolate. We know the faithfulness with which he cor-

<sup>1</sup> Ps. 18<sup>5</sup>

responded with his vocation and the blessed fruitfulness of his preaching.

We who are called to the same ministry, who are some day to be the interpreters of the incarnate Word, should take St. Mark as one of our models. From him we should derive some of that zeal which makes apostles.

Let us thank our Lord for calling us to become preachers of his word, for deigning to raise us to the glory of the priesthood and the apostolate, for destining us to become his coöperators, his ministers, his envoys.

### CONSIDERATIONS

St. Jerome sums up the life of St. Mark in the following words: *Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, wrote a short Gospel. When Peter had heard it, he gave it his approval . . . . Taking with him the Gospel which he had composed, he went into Egypt; he was the first to announce Christ at Alexandria, where he likewise established the Church.*<sup>1</sup> To this the Martyrology adds: *Afterwards, having been seized for the faith of Christ, bound with chains, and bruised with stones, he was at length called to the heavenly kingdom.*

<sup>1</sup> *De Scrip. Eccl.*

Hence St. Mark has the triple honor of being the historian, the apostle, and the martyr of the Gospel.

1. *The historian of the Gospel.* As a disciple of St. Peter, whom he accompanied to Rome, St. Mark was attentive to hear and follow the lessons of the great apostle. It was from St. Peter that he acquired an intimate acquaintance with the details of our Savior's life. Him the apostle chose to be his interpreter.

Soon St. Mark's preaching became so esteemed, that the faithful urged him to commit it to writing for the edification of the vast numbers who had not the privilege to hear his spoken word. In carrying out this great purpose, the Holy Spirit was his inspirer and guide. He submitted his work to St. Peter and the latter, not only approved it, but authorized it to be read in the churches.

Do we not see a clear analogy between the work of St. Mark and the life of a cleric during the years of his priestly education? We are now disciples preparing to become masters. The lessons we receive here should make up the gospel of our future ministry; the time of our seminary life should be consecrated to the composition of that gospel.



The Apocalypse speaks of a mysterious book written within and without. We may see in this a symbol of that gospel which we should write in ourselves. It must be written interiorly, that is our first effort will be to inculcate in ourselves the acts, words and mysteries of the God-man, to progress daily in the knowledge of his adorable person. It must also be written exteriorly, that is by imitating, in our external life, the life and example of our divine model.

Such is the gospel we must write during our seminary course, daily adding a few pages, completing the work by the time that our priestly formation is achieved.

2. *The apostle of the Gospel.* St. Mark not only wrote the gospel, he preached it. *Taking the gospel with him, he proceeded to Egypt.*

Egypt was then a land of superstition. Nowhere, did idolatry assume a more monstrous form. By a strange contrast, it was also a centre of false science. Alexandria, the capital, had become the meeting-place of the philosophies of Greece and the Orient, delirious chimeras and dreams of the human mind.

There it was St. Mark concentrated his

zealous efforts. To these gross idolaters, these philosophers infatuated with their science, he brought the gospel. To sow the seed in this hard soil, he had to undergo every kind of hardship. He preached by word and example, so that the holiness of his life corresponded to the vigor of his exhortations.

God blessed his efforts. Soon Alexandria witnessed a repetition of those miracles of grace that had adorned the cradle of the Church at Jerusalem. The faithful, leaving all they possessed, sought a life of religious solitude, passed their days in prayer and contemplation. Thus St. Mark's preaching inaugurated those examples of holiness which before long gave to Egypt her famed monks and hermits.

A day is coming, not far off, when we, too, armed with the gospel, will set out for another Egypt. Wherever we are sent, like St. Mark, we shall find dark ignorance, errors and prejudices, vices and passions. Though we may not meet the idolatrous superstitions of Egypt, we shall encounter apathy, indifference, and a desolating absence of Christian principles and dispositions in many whom we are sent to save.

We all are called, in a certain sense, to be apostles. To the force of the spoken word, to the urging of zeal, we will need to add the example of a holy life and the all-powerful might of sacerdotal prayer.

3. *The martyr of the Gospel.* With his blood St. Mark sealed the testimony of his preaching, crowning his apostolic labors with a glorious martyrdom. He was not ignorant that the pagans, irritated by the progress of the gospel, had long been plotting his death. Knowing that the consummation of his sacrifice was near, he provided his church with ministers to continue the work he had begun and then awaited the end.

It was on Easter the pagans seized him. For two days, they subjected him to most cruel tortures, in the midst of which he died.

Martyrdom is the greatest and most worthy homage a rational creature can render to God. For an apostle, it is the most prized reward of his labors; true apostles have always regarded it as a supreme privilege. But to suffer death for the faith is a favor granted to but few priests. Although the era of martyrs still continues in the Church, we can scarcely hope that such will be the crown of our life.

But we may bear testimony to God by a martyrdom of constancy in work, of patience in the midst of failure, of enduring courage despite obstacles, of calm gentleness in the presence of turbulence, persecutions, evil treatment, and unjust hatred.

### ACTS AND RESOLUTIONS

We have seen that it is our duty to become evangelists, apostles, martyrs. Grant me, O Lord, an increasing comprehension of this obligation. May I consider the seminary an apostolic school so that when I set forth from it, like the apostles leaving the upper room, I may be filled with a love for Christ, for his Church, and for souls. May my priestly life, like that of St. Mark, be entirely devoted to works of zeal, ready to make any sacrifice in the work of saving souls.

I resolve to measure the importance of all my duties here in the seminary in the light of the mighty work for which they are intended to prepare me.

*Make me a pious and humble disciple . . . . that I may walk according to every indication of thy will.<sup>1</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> IMIT. III, 50<sup>a</sup>

## XXII

### ST. BARNABAS

#### SUMMARY

I. The word *Barnabas* means "son of consolation." We will adore our Lord as the consoler of his Church. He permits her to be tried, but he vouchsafes divine consolations to her. He consoles her especially by the priests. We will thank our Lord for preparing us here to fulfill later the rôle of consolers of his Church.

II. We will consider that St. Barnabas was a consolation to the apostles, to the poor, and to the Gentiles.

1. *To the apostles.* Barnabas had a lively faith and an admirable piety. The miracle of Pentecost changed him into a new man. He obeyed the apostles with simplicity. Now and later we should also be a source of consolation to our superiors.

2. *To the poor.* He encouraged the unfortunate, he came to their aid and knew how to relieve the sufferings of all. The priest is a father to the poor and the consoler of the afflicted.

3. *To the Gentiles.* First with St. Paul, he had the privilege of carrying the joyful tidings of the Gospel to idolaters. The priest, through the Holy Spirit, should communicate divine grace to men. Thus he will be the consolation of sinners.

III. We will remark that it was God who, living in St. Barnabas, consoled the Church. We will ask our divine Master to come to us in order that we can be consolers of the Church like this apostle.

We will resolve:

1. To be kind and charitable to all;
2. To avoid whatever might give pain to others;
3. To encourage and comfort others by our example.

*He was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith.*

### ADORATION

Joseph was the name of the saint whose feast we celebrate to-day. But as the book of the Acts explains, he acquired the name Barnabas. *Joseph, who, by the apostles, was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, by interpretation, The son of consolations.<sup>1</sup>)* Thus did the apostles express their esteem and affection for this disciple.

Let us adore our Lord Jesus Christ, the supreme consoler of his Church. It is true that he does not wish her to be exempt from trials and crosses, for he wishes her to follow his footsteps. Does he not permit her to suffer the bitterness of schism and heresy, the at-

<sup>1</sup> ACTS 4<sup>36</sup>

tacks of impiety, the scandals of her children and even of her ministers?

But, on the other hand, what divine consolations he vouchsafes to her! They arise from confidence in his promises, from her victories, from the ever increasing extension of his kingdom, from the eminent holiness of her saints. He consoles her also by those priests who, filled with his Spirit, are her strength and support.

In fact, the virtues and labors of good priests are the greatest consolation to the Church. Let us thank our Lord for calling us to become consolers of his Church. We will ask him never to permit us to become obstacles in the way of his merciful designs. May he safeguard us from becoming, by unfaithfulness to our duty, a cause of affliction to the Church, instead of being a source of consolation.

### CONSIDERATIONS

St. Barnabas was a consolation to the apostles, to the poor, and to the Gentiles.

1. *St. Barnabas was a consolation to the apostles by his faith and holiness. We read in the Acts that he was a good man, and full*

*of the Holy Ghost and of faith.*<sup>1</sup> There is a tradition that he was converted to the faith by Christ himself. In the upper room along with the apostles he was changed into a new man by the miracle of Pentecost. Under the powerful action of God's grace, his piety, charity, and detachment made him one of the chief ornaments of the early Church. He confirmed the preaching of the Gospel by the example of his life. Says the sacred narrative, "*He exhorted them all with purpose of heart to continue in the Lord.*"<sup>2</sup>

He proclaimed the authority of the apostles by his perfect obedience and docility. *Having land, he sold it, and brought the price, and laid it at the feet of the apostles.*<sup>3</sup> He was truly a son of consolation to the apostles and soon was elevated to the glory of the apostolate himself.

So, too, every good priest seeks to be a son of consolation to those whom God has placed over him in the government of the Church. In the seminary, such a priest was wont to have the same attitude towards his superiors whose duty and responsibility it is to train

<sup>1</sup> ACTS 11<sup>24</sup>

<sup>2</sup> ACTS 4<sup>37</sup>

<sup>3</sup> ACTS 11<sup>23</sup>



him in piety and priestly virtues. This consolation is rendered by generous docility, by application to study, by regularity, and by fervent prayerfulness. When he becomes a priest, he will be a comfort and a true helper to the priest under whose direction he must begin his ministry. If all the priests of a diocese were animated by this spirit, they would fill the heart of their bishop with joy and consolation.

2. *St. Barnabas was a consolation to the poor by the generosity and tenderness of his charity.* St. Chrysostom says that the special gift which St. Barnabas had received from God, of bringing peace to troubled souls, was the principal reason why he was called the son of consolation.

But his charity did not stop with words. He aided their distress with generous alms. His inherited possessions in the Island of Cyprus he gave up in favor of the poor. The field that he retained near Jerusalem he sold and gave the price to the apostles that they might distribute it among the needy.

The priest is the 'father of the poor and the consoler of the afflicted. This is both his title of honor and his sacred duty, for he

must be always ready to bestow the charity of alms and consolation. To aid the poor whom God entrusts to him, he will not hesitate to strip himself of all his possessions, to reduce himself, if need be, to utter indigence, after the example of St. Barnabas.

While relieving bodily needs, he will not neglect those of the soul, which have an even higher claim to his charity. In his own heart, he will find words to encourage and comfort the sorrowing and afflicted, for they will confidently expose to him the secret of their troubles. He is the depository of all their griefs; and no one should leave him without feeling themselves stronger against their trials, more resigned and more hopeful. His charity should breathe the invitation of his divine Master: *Come to me, all you that labor, and are burdened, and I will refresh you.*<sup>1</sup>

3. *St. Barnabas was a consolation to the Gentiles* by the ardor of his zeal. Was he not the first, along with the great apostle, his friend and companion, to bear the good tidings to the Gentile nations? The Holy Ghost himself selected him for that laborious mission.

<sup>1</sup> MATTH. 11<sup>28</sup>

*The Holy Ghost said to them: Separate me Saul and Barnabas, for the work whereunto I have taken them.*<sup>1</sup>

Faithful to this grace of his vocation, he passed through many countries, at times alone, at times in company with St. Paul, preaching Christ everywhere, baptizing his new converts, and founding new churches. *And the Gentiles, hearing it, were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord.*<sup>2</sup>

We, too, must labor to bring the consolations of the faith to the souls of men. The true joy of the soul is sanctifying grace, which destroys sin, the enemy of all peace and interior consolation. But the priest is the instrument by which God communicates this gift to souls. To sinners, he bears a message of reconciliation, curing the troubled anguish of their hearts and pouring therein the peaceful balm of a good conscience.

### ACTS AND RESOLUTIONS

St. Barnabas was the son of consolation because he corresponded to the call of God, because his soul was enriched with the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

<sup>1</sup> ACTS 13<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> ACTS 13<sup>48</sup>

Thou, my God, living in St. Barnabas, didst console the early Church by the ministry of that apostle. *The God of all comfort, who comforteth us in all our tribulation.*<sup>1</sup> Fill my heart with the abundance of thy grace and love, so that I may become a consolation for those about me. May I be so now for my superiors and companions. In time of vacation, may I be so for my family and for those priests who are following my progress with deep interest and for the faithful, who rightly expect to observe a clerical restraint in my words and actions. Especially when I become a priest, may my life be a consolation to my bishop, who has not greater joy on earth than to see his priests pious and devoted to their ministry. May the same be true of my relations with my fellow-priests, and with those souls whom I am to guide, instruct, and sanctify.

I resolve:

1. To be kind and charitable to all;
2. To avoid whatever will give pain to others;
3. To encourage and comfort others by my own example.

*He was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith.*<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> II COR. 1<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> ACTS 11<sup>24</sup>

## XXIII

### ST. ALOYSIUS

#### SUMMARY

I. We will adore the Holy Spirit enriching the soul of St. Aloysius with treasures of divine grace. We will recognize the wonderful work of grace in his soul and his faithful correspondence with it.

II. In the life of St. Aloysius, we will consider the practice of detachment, penance, and prayer.

1. *Detachment.* He renounced the world to follow Christ. He forsook riches, worldly greatness, and inherited honors for the hidden life of a religious.

2. *Penance.* He entered early upon a life of mortification and penance. This fondness for austerities increased when he entered the novitiate.

3. *Prayer.* St. Aloysius had no difficulty in uniting himself to God in meditation. He was especially fond of meditating on the passion of Christ and the Holy Eucharist.

III. We will remind ourselves that every priestly life ought to be marked by detachment, penance, and prayer. We will recall our profession of these three virtues when receiving tonsure. We will ask ourselves how we have been practicing them.

We will resolve:

1. To give up every attachment that may impede the work of God's grace in our souls;
2. To impress our lives with the spirit of penance;
3. Especially during vacation, to remain faithful to the daily practice of meditation.

*St. Aloysius, pray for us.*

### ADORATION

Let us adore the Holy Spirit enriching the soul of St. Aloysius Gonzaga with treasures of grace even from childhood. At that early age this young saint felt himself called to the practice of eminent perfection. As if by instinct, he had a horror of vice and a love of holiness. God, who destined him to become the model of Christian youth, preserved his heart from evil and inspired him to most heroic virtues even at a tender age.

We wonder at the working of grace in St. Aloysius' soul. This influence of grace enlightened his mind with an extraordinarily clear conception of God and his infinite perfections; it turned his heart to a deep love of God; and it strengthened his will to overcome the difficulties and obstacles that would have hindered his generous aspirations of fervor.

Let us pay our homage to St. Aloysius himself, who corresponded with God's grace so faithfully. His life was simple and ordinary, yet on the other hand it was also noble and perfect; his pure and generous soul was reflected in a modest, humble, and recollected exterior. Let us admire this beautiful model and thank this faithful protector, joyfully resolving to increase our love for this angelic saint.

### CONSIDERATIONS

We are familiar with pictures of St. Aloysius representing him with a crown at his feet, an instrument of penance in one hand, and in the other a crucifix. These three symbols represent the three degrees by which he rose to the perfection of divine union: detachment, penance, and prayer.

1. *Detachment.* St. Aloysius renounced the world to follow Christ. By his birth he might have acquired a right to pleasure, riches, and worldly greatness.

But he was convinced of the nothingness and vanity of earthly things. Very early he understood that God alone deserved to claim his heart and that to God he ought to consecrate

himself without reserve. From being rich, he became poor; from worldly greatness, he sought lowliness; for inherited dignities and honors, he substituted the hidden religious life. In quitting all, he found God. Our Lord bestowed upon him joys and consolations far above sensual gratifications and worldly pleasures. He found greater delight in his little cell at the novitate than in the rich palace which he abandoned.

2. *Penance.* He entered upon a life of mortification and penance in the spirit of self-renunciation. A soul called to the perfect life is a victim perpetually offered to God. Not only must it be sanctified and set apart, it must be immolated. Christ, the great Victim, was immolated on the cross. Holiness is always a crucifixion. *Qui autem sunt Christi*, says St. Paul, *carnem suam crucifixerunt*.<sup>1</sup>

This, too, is the path by which the Holy Spirit led St. Aloysius. Early in life, an attraction for mortification prompted him to seize every occasion of bringing his body into subjection through penances imposed upon it.

<sup>1</sup> GAL. 5<sup>24</sup>



In early youth, his fasts were frequent, his penances rigorous.

This fondness for mortification only increased when he entered the novitiate. For he took advantage of the numerous opportunities for mortification offered by community life. Most strictly did he observe the rule of silence. So attentively did he watch over the irregular movements of nature, that he learned how to make everything a means to greater sanctification. Like the great apostle, he could say: *Always bearing about in our body the mortification of Jesus.*<sup>1</sup>

3. *Prayer.* St. Aloysius had no difficulty in raising his heart and mind to God in prayer and in remaining in his divine presence. In fact, the thought of God was so natural to him that it required an effort to withdraw his thought from God so as to fix it upon other objects. Those distractions in prayer which are a trial for pious souls were unknown to him.

He was especially fond of meditating on the passion of Christ and the Holy Eucharist. The contemplation of this double prodigy

<sup>1</sup> II COR. 4<sup>10</sup>

of Christ's love produced so keen an impression on St. Aloysius' soul as often to make him weep.

His superiors, fearing that his intense application to meditation might injure his health, abridged his time of mental prayer and finally forbade it altogether. His most earnest efforts to obey were futile in withdrawing him from the contemplation of God. This gift of prayer increased in him as he came nearer to the end of his life; his last illness was but an uninterrupted prayer, a divine prelude of the contemplation which was to be his bliss in heaven.

### ACTS AND RESOLUTIONS

Every Christian life, especially every priestly life, ought to be one of detachment, penance, and prayer. When receiving tonsure, I publicly professed the practice of these three virtues by a triple symbol; the cutting of my hair, receiving the cassock, and putting on the surplice. Without detachment, penance, and prayer I will never be a true priest. This is plainly the teaching of the Gospel, the example of holy priests, and the oft repeated admonitions of my seminary superiors.

Have I sincerely accepted this teaching? Have I put it into practice? Like St. Aloysius, have I given up all attachment to things of earth? Am I fond of mortification and penance? At least do I submit to those which arise from the performance of my daily duties, those which God himself imposes? What progress have I made in meditation? Am I more recollected, more united to God, freer from distractions than a year ago? Have I used the means suggested for this purpose?

My God, I desire to become more faithful in the practice of detachment, penance, and prayer. This grace I ask through the intercession of St. Aloysius. Like him, I am called to thy service. Grant that, like him, I may correspond to the grace of my vocation.

I resolve.

1. To give up every attachment that may impede the work of God's grace in my soul;

2. To impress my life with the spirit of penance;

3. Especially during vacation, to remain faithful to the daily practice of meditation.

*St. Aloysius, pray for us.*

## XXIV

### ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST

#### SUMMARY

I. We will adore our Lord raising up precursors to prepare the world for his coming. St. John the Baptist deserved this title more than all the prophets, since he saw the Savior with his own eyes and pointed him out to others. We will take this saint as a model.

II. We will consider three things in the life of St. John the Baptist.

1. *His miraculous birth.* An angel descended from heaven to announce his mission. He was sanctified in his mother's womb. When he came into the world, the power of speech was miraculously restored to his father. Priestly vocations are likewise implanted, developed, and made known by God's special providence.

2. *His penance in the desert.* God separated him from the world because he wished to raise him to eminent perfection. He was to be the preacher of penance, and it was necessary for him to practise it beforehand. It is also in the desert, it is in the solitude of the seminary that the future priest prepares himself for his mission.

3. *His preaching.* It had three characteristics. St. John the Baptist awaited the summons of Providence. His speech spared neither sin nor

sinner. He practised self-denial and humbled himself before our Lord. The priest should imitate this model in the work of his ministry.

III. We will thank God for having given us a vocation similar to St. John's. We will humble ourselves for not having the qualifications of the holy precursor.

We will resolve to imitate the life of the Baptist in the spirit of prayerfulness and sacrifice.

*He was a burning and a shining light.*

### ADORATION

Let us adore our Lord preparing the world for his coming by raising up precursors to herald his approach and to prepare men's minds for acceptance of his teaching and their hearts for obedience to his laws. For ages, the prophets had successively predicted his coming, the mysteries of his life, and his reign of glory.

But in a special manner the title of precursor of Christ belongs to St. John the Baptist. At his very birth, his father Zachary had *prophetically* said: *Thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways.*<sup>1</sup> Unlike the other prophets, he saw the Savior with his own eyes and pointed him out to

<sup>1</sup> LUKE 17<sup>8</sup>

others. *There hath stood one in the midst of you, said he to the Jews, whom you know not.*<sup>1</sup> Our Lord himself said of him: *He was a burning and a shining light.*<sup>2</sup> This expression betokens the eminence of the Baptist's holiness and the fruitfulness of his apostolate.

Since we, too, are destined to be precursors of Christ in the souls of men, we may take this saint as a model. We will ask God, through St. John's intercession, the grace to correspond so faithfully to our vocation as to deserve that same praise: *He was a burning and a shining light.*

### CONSIDERATIONS

On this feast of St. John the Baptist, let us consider his miraculous birth, his life in the wilderness, and his preaching.

1. *The birth of the Baptist was marked by wonderful prodigies, so that all they that heard them laid them up in their heart, saying: What an one, think ye, shall this child be? For the hand of the Lord was with him.*<sup>3</sup> It is an archangel from heaven who announces to

<sup>1</sup> JN. 1<sup>26</sup>

<sup>2</sup> LUKE 1<sup>68</sup>

<sup>3</sup> JN. 5<sup>25</sup>

Zachary that God was about to answer his prayers, was going to give him a son. *He shall be great before the Lord . . . . He shall be filled with the Holy Ghost . . . . He shall convert many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him . . . . to prepare unto the Lord a perfect people.*<sup>1</sup> A few months after his conception, he was sanctified in his mother's womb. At his coming into the world, the power of speech was restored to Zachary who thereupon, in a prophetic canticle, celebrated the mission of his son and the glorious reign of the Messiah whose precursor and preacher John was to become.

Priests, who are likewise precursors of Christ in the souls of men, God predestines for this glorious mission by a divine decree; in their souls, he places a seed which, by developing, will procure a pious and zealous minister for the Church. By certain signs he makes known to their parents or their spiritual directors or even to themselves the course on which he invites them to enter. This is ordinarily the history of true priestly vocation.

<sup>1</sup> LUKE 1<sup>15-17</sup>

2. *The life of John the Baptist in the wilderness. The child grew and was strengthened in spirit; and was in the deserts until the day of his manifestation to Israel.*<sup>1</sup> Whenever God wishes to elevate a soul to an eminent perfection, he separates it from the world and invites it to a life of solitude. This was how the precursor passed his life until that predestined hour when the voice of God summoned him forth to preach repentance. It was in solitude the Baptist reached a height of sanctity that was to give a wonderful prestige to his words.

Those years in the wilderness were a life of silence and solitude. Far from haunts of men, St. John, wishing no intercourse with the world devoted himself entirely to the work of his sanctification. No distracting sound reached him; no anxiety troubled the peace of his soul.

His life was, moreover, one of mortification and penance. We see it indicated in the words of the gospel. *He had his garment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins: and his meat was locusts and wild honey.*<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> LUKE 1<sup>80</sup>

<sup>2</sup> MATTH. 3<sup>4</sup>



The Savior refers to his rigorous abstinence, saying: *John came neither eating nor drinking.*<sup>1</sup>

Lastly, the desire for contemplation and prayer led the Baptist into the desert where he could converse more familiarly with God. Prayer must have been his habitual occupation during the long years of his retreat, during which as the Fathers tell us, God generously communicated to him the light of truth and the treasures of grace.

St. John's hidden life in the desert represents the solitude in which a seminarian should dwell during the years of his novitiate, and also that spirit of retreat and separation from the world which a priest should maintain if he is not to lose the lofty spirituality of his holy ministry. When the minister of Christ appears before men to preach penance, to urge sinners to contrition, to announce the kingdom of God, he should issue forth from the retreat of silent intercourse with God. Then, will his words have an unction that will move hearts, he will be the precursor of Christ.

3. *The Baptist's preaching.* Let us consider three characteristics of his preaching.

<sup>1</sup> MATTH. 11<sup>18</sup>

In the first place, despite his ardent desire to announce the coming Messiah, he did not anticipate the fullness of time determined by divine Providence. He awaited the summons of the divine voice. *The word of the Lord, says St. Luke, was made unto John, the son of Zachary, in the desert. And he came into all the country about the Jordan, preaching the baptism of penance for the remission of sins.*<sup>1</sup>

God has spoken; the Baptist emerges from the desert. The multitudes, regarding him as a prodigy of holiness, rush to hear him. His speech is burning and fearless. The vices of high and low, rich and poor are fearlessly censured by him. The dauntless preacher denounces vicious scandal even though it be seated on a kingly throne. He fears not to hurl a wrathful *non licet* at the prince himself. The reward of his holy boldness was imprisonment and martyrdom.

Lastly, what should above all command our admiration is the humility and self-denial that accompanied St. John's preaching. He is the herald of the Messiah. Never does he forget that mission, never does he attribute

<sup>1</sup> LUKE 3<sup>2</sup>

to himself the glory which belongs to him whose reign he has come to prepare. *He must increase, but I must decrease.*<sup>1</sup> *There shall come one mightier than I, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to loose.*<sup>2</sup>

This is an example for us in preaching the word of God. Conscious, as we are, of the greatness of our mission, of its difficulties and responsibilities, we should not seek to anticipate the day appointed by God. This is made known to us by the voice of our superiors.

Once assigned to a part of the Lord's vineyard, we should cultivate it with whole-hearted good will and ardent zeal, thinking only of God and the good of souls.

If this spirit animate us, we will be free from every thought of self-seeking of worldly gain, or of self-glorification.

### ACTS AND RESOLUTIONS

My God, as thou hast called me from among thousands to prepare men for the coming of thy kingdom into their hearts, may I not refer to myself the words of Isaias which the Church applies to John the Baptist: *The Lord*

<sup>1</sup> JOHN 3<sup>30</sup>

<sup>2</sup> LUKE 3<sup>16</sup>

*hath called me from the womb, from the bowels of my mother he hath been mindful of my name. And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword: in the shadow of his hand he hath protected me, and hath made me as a chosen arrow.*<sup>1</sup>

Like the Baptist, I should strive earnestly to become worthy of this mission. During these years in the seminary, I ought to have no other object in mind but that of suitably preparing myself. I must be ready to preach the doctrine of Christ without respect of persons, ready, also, to pour out my blood in witness to my preaching.

I know, my God, that I am far from the spirit of John the Baptist, preparing for his mission by those years in the desert. Grant that I may so improve as to justify the hope that as a priest I will worthily imitate the fearless courage and zeal of St. John.

I resolve to imitate the life of the Baptist in the spirit of prayerfulness and the spirit of sacrifice.

*He was a burning and a shining light.*<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> IS. 49<sup>1</sup>

<sup>2</sup> JOHN 5<sup>35</sup>

## XXV

### ST. PETER AND ST. PAUL

#### SUMMARY

- I. We will adore our Lord calling these two holy apostles and giving them to the Church. St. Peter was only a fisherman, St. Paul was a persecutor; they were both the work of grace. We will honor them as the chief sources of the apostolic spirit.
- II. In the apostolic life of St. Peter and St. Paul we will distinguish three things: its principle, its law, and its result.

1. *Love for Christ*, which was the foundation of their apostolate. The divine Master exacted of St. Peter a triple protestation of love; and the epistles of St. Paul testify that this devotion was at least equal in that apostle.

2. *The spirit of sacrifice*, which was the law of their apostolate. Jesus promised both of them sacrifice. The life of St. Peter and of St. Paul show us how the Savior kept his promise.

3. *The conversion of the world*, the fruit of their apostolate. God blessed their works. They founded churches everywhere. Their letters are a testimony to the success which crowned their efforts, and to the progress and spread of the Gospel.

- III. We will recall that the apostolic life should continue and that it is we who must replace the

apostles. We will ask ourselves if we love our Savior enough and if we are faithful to the law of sacrifice.

We will resolve:

1. To ask Christ to strengthen us in his love;
2. To train ourselves for the service of the Church and souls, in a readiness to undertake any labor and to undergo any sacrifice.

*Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee.*

### ADORATION

Let us adore our Lord who gave to the Church SS. Peter and Paul, in whom is summed up all the glory of the apostolate. In a special manner might he say to them: *I have chosen you; and have appointed you, that you should go, and should bring forth fruit; and your fruit should remain.*<sup>1</sup> He enriched them with the treasures of his grace, raised them in a place of eminence among the apostles, and blessed their preaching with most astonishing fruitfulness.

St. Peter was a plain fisherman, whose learning was limited to the management of his boat and nets. Following the impenetrable designs of divine wisdom, Christ turned

<sup>1</sup> JOHN 15<sup>16</sup>

his eyes upon St. Peter to make him the depositary and interpreter of revealed truths, the doctor of doctors, the head of his Church: *Thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church.*<sup>1</sup> Thus does God employ the weakest instruments to accomplish his greatest purposes: *The weak things of the world hath God chosen, that he may confound the strong.*<sup>2</sup>

St. Paul seemed even less prepared for the mighty mission for which God destined him. That very Church which Christ had just founded through St. Peter's preaching, St. Paul was persecuting and he had sworn to destroy it, to stifle it in the blood of its children, when, stricken to the ground on the road to Damascus, he became one of its most zealous propagators.

St. Peter and St. Paul were, therefore, the work of grace, a lasting witness to its sovereign power. Let us honor them as the chief source of the apostolic spirit in which all priests must share, that spirit which still gives the Church holy priests and zealous missionaries by whom the apostolic work will continue until the end of time.

Some day we, too, shall be apostles. Our

<sup>1</sup> MATTH. 16<sup>18</sup>

<sup>2</sup> I COR. 1<sup>27</sup>

devotion to St. Peter and St. Paul should be dearer to us than our devotion to any other saint.

### CONSIDERATIONS

In the apostolic life of St. Peter and St. Paul let us consider its principle, the love for Christ, its law the spirit of sacrifice, and its result, the conversion of the world.

1. *Love for Christ* was the foundation of their apostolic life. Is not the apostolate a work of love, or rather is it not the most sublime expression of love? We should expect to find these two apostles, placed at the head of the apostolic college, surpassingly filled with love for Christ. Such, in fact, they were.

Let us recall the passage in St. John's Gospel where the beloved disciple tells us of St. Peter's investiture with his sublime mission. The Savior is about to leave his disciples and return to his heavenly Father. To St. Peter, he addresses these solemn words: *Simon, son, of John, lovest thou me more than these?*<sup>1</sup> Only after St. Peter's third protestation: *Lord, thou knowest that I love thee*, does the divine Master confide the care of the Church to him and make him its supreme pastor.

<sup>1</sup> JOHN 21<sup>15</sup>



Love for Christ was also the characteristic trait of St. Paul's great soul. No sooner has the Savior revealed himself to Saul, than the latter's violent hatred is transformed into the most ardent love that ever kindled the heart of man. All his epistles express this consuming love. The ever recurring name of Christ testifies that St. Paul's mind and heart are constantly occupied with the Savior; Christ is his life, he wishes to know only him, to work only for him. He is Christ's slave and apostle, and he sighs for the hour when he will be united to him forever. He even pronounces anathema against those who do not love this adorable Master. What a cry of love reaches us in his words? *Who then shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation? or distress? or famine? . . . . But in all these things we overcome, because of him that hath loved us.*<sup>1</sup>

2. *The spirit of sacrifice* was the law of their apostolate. Nothing great and noble is accomplished except by sacrifice. It is a universal law that applies in a special manner to supernatural works. Our personal sanctification is accomplished by sacrifice. We

<sup>1</sup> ROM. 8 35

may, with even greater reason, expect it required in the work of the apostolate.

When our Lord had rewarded St. Peter's love by conferring his great powers upon him, he did not conceal from him the immolation that would be required. *When thou wast younger, thou didst gird thyself, and didst walk where thou wouldst. But when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and lead thee whither thou wouldst not.*<sup>1</sup>

A like prophecy was made to St. Paul when his divine election was made known. *This man to me is a vessel of election . . . . For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.*<sup>2</sup>

We know how these prophecies of labor, suffering, persecution, and martyrdom were fulfilled in the case of both apostles. We know their fatiguing labors as they preached Christ everywhere despite a thousand dangers, their reward of contempt, insults, persecutions. They were loaded with chains, cast into prison, scourged, exposed to wild beasts. After more than thirty years of most laborious ministry, they met again at Rome, there to terminate their lives, there to consummate their im-

<sup>1</sup> JOHN 21<sup>18</sup>

<sup>2</sup> ACTS 9<sup>16</sup>

molation by a glorious martyrdom: St. Paul by decapitation, St. Peter by crucifixion.

Sacrifice will likewise mark the life of every priest who faithfully corresponds to his vocation. His apostolate will be a continual self-immolation.

3. *The conversion of the world.* God blessed the labors of St. Peter and St. Paul. In Judea, Asia Minor, Greece, Italy, Gaul, Spain, and elsewhere the preaching of these apostles founded a vast number of churches. In town after town, they gathered a little circle of converts around them. Thanks to the zeal of a few fervent disciples, this seed developed and soon an organized church appeared, with a bishop at its head, and other workers who labored under the orders of the chief pastor. Ordinarily, they preached first in the synagogue and there found their first followers.

The letters of these apostles are an authentic testimony to the wonderful progress and spread of the Gospel even during their lifetime. In nearly all the important cities of the Roman empire, flourishing Christian communities were to be found, filled with an intense faith and following the maxims of the Gospel. At the close of their long apostolate when they received the crown of martyrdom,

they could see with joy the Church had already established her title to be called Catholic.

### ACTS AND RESOLUTIONS

The apostolic life must ever continue in the Church. Not only is it continued by the missionaries, who represent it most perfectly, but it is also exemplified in all priests.

My God, in calling me to the priesthood, thou hast called me to be an apostle, to inherit the spirit that animated St. Peter and St. Paul, to imitate their virtues. Grant that, like theirs, my life may be summed up by love for Christ and the spirit of sacrifice.

Have I yet begun to put these two maxims into practice? Am I able to say that nothing in the world can separate me from the love of Christ? Can I repeat St. Peter's words: *Lord, thou knowest all things: thou knowest that I love thee?*<sup>1</sup>

Have I the spirit of sacrifice? With what spirit do I meet the little trials of daily life? Does it give promise that I will not hesitate before the greater sacrifices that my office will require of me later on?

Grant me, my Savior, a share in those graces which thou didst pour out so abundantly

<sup>1</sup> JOHN 21<sup>17</sup>

on thy blessed apostles Peter and Paul. May I be more and more animated by their spirit and imitate their virtues.

I resolve:

1. To ask Christ to strengthen me in his love;

2. To train myself, for the service of the Church and souls, in a readiness to undertake any labor and to undergo any sacrifice.

*Lord, thou knowest all things: thou knowest that I love thee.*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> JOHN 21<sup>15</sup>

## XXVI

### ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

#### SUMMARY

I. We will adore our Savior bestowing on St. Vincent de Paul the abundance of his grace, taking him from the humblest rank to have him accomplish works of great magnitude. After blessing and thanking God, we will pay homage to this holy priest.

II. We will see that three virtues sum up the fruitful life of St. Vincent de Paul:

1. *His piety.* St. Vincent de Paul was above all a saint. Prayer was the nourishment of his life. He said mass with a devotion which brought tears to those assisting. He frequently visited our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. His piety was manifested in all his undertakings.

2. *His charity.* This above all is the virtue which men admire in him. All the evils of our fallen humanity found help in him, not only in Paris but in the farthest provinces. Still more admirable was his zeal for the salvation of souls.

3. *His humility.* He hid the qualities he possessed and the graces he received from God. He had only contempt for himself. A thing to be admired he was humble even regarding the society he founded.

III. We will call to mind that these three are sacerdotal virtues. We will ask ourselves if we really possess them. We will entreat St. Vincent de Paul to raise up among us a great number of priests who understand this threefold obligation.

We will resolve:

1. To make piety, charity, and humility the object of a holy ambition;

2. To be faithful to mental prayer;

3. To pray St. Vincent de Paul for the clergy.

*He that shall humble himself shall be exalted.*

### ADORATION

Let us adore our Lord bestowing on St. Vincent de Paul the abundance of his grace, adorning him with those graces which are the marks of a holy priest. God chose him from the humblest ranks of the people to call him to the priestly honor and to accomplish works of great magnitude.

He had scarcely attained the priesthood, when he was taken into captivity, carried to Africa, and there for two years underwent the hardship of slavery. Delivered by a sort of miracle, he returned to his country where he then passed several years in the ministry before God made known the mission reserved for him. At about the age of fifty, a series of providential circumstances led him to estab-

lish two important societies. Not merely was he the centre and soul of charitable undertakings, he even succeeded in enterprises that powerful sovereigns would not have ventured to attempt.

In the great work of St. Vincent de Paul, we see the hand of God and the inspiration of his grace. Blessed be our Savior who humbles the haughty and glorifies the humble. St. Vincent was an instrument of divine Providence in reforming the clergy and founding seminaries. Him who was a founder of seminaries, we may well regard as our protector in heaven.

### CONSIDERATIONS

Three virtues sum up St. Vincent de Paul's life: eminent piety, boundless charity, deep humility.

1. *Piety.* The foundation and, so to speak, the general form of sanctity, what makes Christian virtues more than simply human, is piety towards God. St. Vincent was a priest of eminent piety.

His lofty virtue and holiness was nourished by daily mental prayer. In fact, he insistently recommended this practice to his priests.



To this important exercise he devoted a full hour every morning, to which he added whatever portions of the day and night were not occupied by his other duties. We might almost say that his mental prayer was continual, for even in the midst of active affairs, he scarcely ever lost sight of God's presence, praying to God in his heart while conversing with men.

When performing any religious function, such as his breviary or mass, his spirit of recollection and devotion was manifest in his outward demeanor. His devotion to the Holy Eucharist accounts for his practice of frequently visiting the Blessed Sacrament. Accustomed as he was to see God and his providence in all things, it was for God that he worked, from him that he drew his inspirations, by his light that he directed his steps, on his help that he relied. He sought only God's glory in all his undertakings, blessing God in adversity as in prosperity, in failure as well as in success.

2. *Charity.* St. Vincent's piety was equalled by his fraternal charity. His whole life was a prodigy of charity, unique perhaps in the annals of the Church. All the evils that

afflict our fallen humanity found pity and help in him. The sick, the poor, the orphans, the aged, even the criminals condemned to the galleys, were the object of his solicitude. We can not count the charitable institutions that he founded. No less difficult would be the reckoning of his alms, which reached incredible sums.

In his day, France suffered the ravages of war, pestilence, and famine. Frightful misery decimated the population; on all sides were desolation and ruin. To bring relief to so many calamities seemed impossible. But the great soul of St. Vincent did not recognize impossibilities.

He gathered all his resources, appealed to men of good will, organized the distribution of aid, and single-handed for ten years, without prejudice to his ordinary charities, he relieved every form of distress.

Soon there threatened another calamity. Political disorders in Paris threatened the country round about with a desolating famine. But, owing to his charitable efforts, thousands of poor were saved from death.

Still more do we admire St. Vincent's work for the salvation of souls. Having begun to

give missions in the country districts, he founded a society of priests destined to continue the work. Soon his zeal passed beyond the confines of France. Ireland, Poland, Italy, Tunis, Algiers, Madagascar, the Hebrides were evangelized by his priests, at the cost of incredible sacrifices.

Happy would he have been to lay down his own life for the conversion of infidels. "We must be," he once said, "unreservedly at the service of God and our neighbor, ready to go wherever it pleases God to have us, whether to India or to more distant places, ready to expose our lives for our neighbor's spiritual good and for the extension of God's kingdom in the souls of men."

He observed a weakening of the sacerdotal spirit. To remedy this evil he introduced weekly conferences, retreats preparatory for ordinations, and lastly seminaries.

3. *Humility.* A study of St. Vincent's life shows that he neglected no opportunity to practice this fundamental Christian virtue. "He fled from honors and praise," says his biographer, "as if they were a pestilence. Never did he seek to justify himself when rebuked. He condemned his smallest imper-

fections with more severity than others employed towards their greatest sins."

Not content with hiding the admirable qualities that he possessed, the graces that he received, and the good that he did, he humbled himself on every possible occasion. He was fond of recalling the lowliness of his origin, considered himself as most ignorant, and thought that he did not even earn his daily bread. His habit of belittling his talent, his judgment, his virtue, was not an empty formula on his lips. It was a true expression of his innermost convictions. The most admirable form of humility was that he wished the society which he founded to be considered as the least. He would not permit it to be praised and ordered his priests to take the humblest place at all assemblies of the clergy.

### ACTS AND RESOLUTIONS

To live in close union with God by the practice of meditation, to exercise unmeasured charity in relieving our neighbor's spiritual and corporal needs, to recognize that the credit and glory of whatever good is in us or is done by us does not belong to us: are not these the marks of a model priest?

Such was the programme of St. Vincent's life, such the programme that I should adopt in my priesthood. It is not my hope to perform the great works that have made St. Vincent's name famous in the history of God's Church. But in whatever circumstances my priestly life may be spent, I shall have need to imitate the great virtues of St. Vincent de Paul: piety, charity, and humility.

My Savior, deign to raise up a great number of priests whose lives will exemplify these three virtues. What a transformation there would be in men's souls, if all priests thus viewed the duty of their ministry!

Help me, my God, to approach this ideal. I ask it by the intercession of this model priest, St. Vincent de Paul.

I resolve:

To make piety, charity, and humility the object of a holy ambition;

2. To be faithful to mental prayer;

3. To pray St. Vincent de Paul for the clergy.

*He that shall humble himself shall be exalted.*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> MATTH. 23<sup>12</sup>

## XXVII

### THE GUARDIAN ANGELS

#### SUMMARY

I. We will renew our belief in the guardian angels. We will adore the mercy of God as manifested in this dispensation of his providence. We will pay our homage of gratitude and love to our guardian angel.

II. We will see that:

1. *Our guardian angel is our companion.* He is with us from the moment of birth and will never leave us. This consoling thought of his presence is well calculated to restrain any tendency to undue levity or immodesty.

2. *He is our protector.* He exercises this protection in the temporal order by helping us escape impending dangers; and in the spiritual order, by helping us avoid evil and practice virtue.

3. *He will conduct us into the promised land.* This promised land is, above all, the seminary; later, it will be the priesthood; finally, it will be heaven.

III. We will ask ourselves if our faith in our guardian angel is firm and practical.

We will resolve:

1. To address a short prayer to our guardian angel, especially on rising in the morning and on retiring at night;

2. To turn to him in times of difficulty and temptation.

*Angele Dei, qui custos es mei, me tibi commissum  
hac die illumina, custodi, rege et gubernas.*

## ADORATION

Let us renew our belief in the doctrine of guardian angels. This consoling doctrine is not a pious legend nor a poetical fancy. It is an incontestable truth vouched for by Sacred Scripture and the tradition of the Church.

Before creating the earth, the animals and man, God had made the angels. From the ranks of these blessed spirits, he chose guardians and protectors for man, and appointed them to represent his providence. Their ministry counterbalances the evil influence of the bad angels who are occupied night and day in tempting us, in drawing us into their own ruin.

Holy Writ tells us of the angels descending to earth to make known the mandates of heaven and to deliver from their enemies those whom God protects. We are taught that each one of us has his guardian angel, an invisible protector who stays near us to help us in need and to direct our steps.

Let us adore the mercy of God as manifested in this dispensation of his providence. To our guardian angel, let us pay our homage of gratitude and love. Even as we now gather here in prayer, our good angels are praying and adoring with us. Let us ask them to help us spend this year in faithful coöperation with God's grace.

### CONSIDERATIONS

When the people of God were setting out from Egypt, he said to them: *Behold I will send my angel, who shall go before thee and keep thee in thy journey and bring thee into the place that I have prepared.*<sup>1</sup> Our guardian angel has a like office to perform for each of us. Let us consider our guardian angel, therefore, as our companion, our protector, and our guide to the promised land.

1. *Our guardian angel is our companion.* *Behold I will send my angel, who shall go before thee.* While the people of God, freed from Egyptian slavery, were journeying to the promised land, the angel of the Lord preceded them and showed them the way. A column

<sup>1</sup> Ex. 23<sup>20</sup>



of cloud by day and a pillar of light by night, he was the instrument and at times even the visible symbol of God's providence for Israel.

To be sure, no visible sign reveals the presence of our guardian angel. But Christian tradition indicates his presence more surely than a cloud or a pillar of light.

When a child is born, God at once, from the height of heaven, commissions one of his angels to be its guardian, to accompany it throughout the course of its life. This child will thenceforth be the object of its special solicitude. When he becomes a young man, should he, like the prodigal son, abandon himself to the slavery of his passions, should he forsake the friendship of God to enter upon the path of sin, yet his guardian angel will not quit the mission entrusted to him. He will accompany his every step, be at his side at the hour of death, and even accompany him before the judgment-seat of God.

Though men forsake me, though my friends no longer remain faithful to me, yet my good angel will never leave me. This thought of his presence is not only a consoling thought in our trials, but it is also well calculated to restrain any tendency to undue levity or to

immodesty. St. Bernard said to his religious: *Before your guardian angel would you dare do what you would blush to do before me?*<sup>1</sup>

2. *He is our protector.* Our guardian angel is not only a companion, but, as his name indicates, a protector. *I will send my angel,* said God to the Israelites, *who shall keep thee in thy journey.*

Before reaching the promised land, the Israelites had to encounter many enemies. Pharaoh pursued them, Amalec disputed their passage, others, too, opposed them. But the angel of God defended them. Consequently, despite their weakness, they were always victorious over their enemies.

In like manner, as we learn from our daily experience, our path is beset by no lesser dangers. What a constant struggle is needed to sustain both the bodily and the spiritual life! The former is hourly exposed to so many destructive influences, and the latter is threatened by the devil, the world, and the power of concupiscence. But the words of the Psalmist encourage us: *The angel of the Lord shall encamp round about them that fear him: and shall deliver them.*<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Serm. 12 in Ps. 90.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ps. 33<sup>s</sup>*

Not only has our guardian angel helped us escape from impending evils, he has often aided us in emerging from the evil into which we have fallen. When we were in sin, our good angel has had to struggle against the suggestions of Satan who sought to hinder our contrition.

3. *He will conduct us into the promised land.* After all their trials and wanderings in the desert, the Israelites, with an angel for their guide, entered into the land which God destined for them. *He shall bring thee into the place which I have prepared.*

Our good angel's mission is to lead into a promised land: the seminary, the priesthood, our home in heaven.

We have just reached the first of these three. May it not be partly due to our guardian angel that we did not stray from the path that led us to the seminary? Had we not many difficulties and doubts to overcome? Were we not invisibly guided by our guardian angel?

But his task is not finished. He must still conduct us to the priesthood. Let us be assured that he will continue to watch over us, helping us surmount the difficulties of study, of fidelity to our exercises of piety and the

prescriptions of the rule. And he will remove the last clouds that dim the question of our vocation.

When we become priests, he will guide us along the way of holiness and zeal. At our last hour, his watchfulness will be rewarded by our happy death; he will then carry our soul to the tribunal of the sovereign Judge and will usher us into the bliss of heaven, our promised home, where we are to receive the reward that God reserves for his faithful priests.

### ACTS AND RESOLUTIONS

The Church recommends devotion to the guardian angels; masters of the spiritual life point out its advantages, the saints practiced it. Has it a place in my spiritual life?

Has my faith in the doctrine of the guardian angels been clouded by doubt? Have I resisted such thoughts? Have I not acted as though I did not know I had a guardian angel? Have I turned to him in times of temporal or spiritual need?

Angel of God, I do not deny that I have failed in gratitude for thy care of me. I have even resisted the light and inspirations

which have come from thee. Forgive my ingratitude, my forgetfulness, my resistance.

I resolve:

1. To address a short prayer to my guardian angel especially on rising in the morning and on retiring at night;

2. To turn to him in times of difficulty and temptation.

*Angeie Dei, qui custos es mei, me tibi commissum hac die illumina, custodi, rege et gubernas.*

## XXVIII

### ST. THERESA

#### SUMMARY

I. We will honor St. Theresa's marvelous knowledge, ardent charity, and tireless energy. We will adore our Lord living and reigning in this saint and we will bless him in the wonders accomplished through her. To praise St. Theresa fittingly, we will unite ourselves to the pious daughters of Carmel, the heirs of her spirit.

II. We will see that St. Theresa was faithful to God in a threefold manner.

1. *In the calm of contemplation.* She had the gift of mental prayer, but she united her efforts to the grace of God to overcome the difficulties and weariness she encountered at first in this exercise. Do we attach the same importance to mental prayer? Do we struggle against difficulties?

2. *In active labor.* From the retirement of her solitude, she exercised a veritable apostolate. She reformed the Order of Carmel; she founded thirty-two convents; she wrote letters and numerous books. Are we preparing ourselves for the apostolate by study?

3. *In suffering.* She prayed to God for suffering. Our Lord sent her physical ailments, sufferings of the soul, human opposition and contradic-

tion. We will certainly have to suffer later; are we ready?

III. We will thank the divine Master for having us meditate on this beautiful model. We will examine ourselves on our fidelity to prayer, study, and the virtue of patience.

We will resolve:

1. To esteem meditation more heartily;
2. To resist the natural spirit of slothfulness;
3. To accept gladly all the hardships that we experience in living up to the rule of the seminary.

*The meditation of my heart shall be always in thy sight.*

## ADORATION

Let us honor in St. Theresa the heavenly gifts which it pleased God to bestow upon her. In her intellect, there was a marvelous knowledge of the workings of the soul; in her heart, a charity that seemed too great for man; in her will, tireless energy and fearless courage. When she gave herself to God, she did so with a generosity that made her a perfect model of holiness. Our Lord employed her for the sanctification of a great number of souls, whose directress and mother she was to be and who remained the heirs of her spirit.

Let us adore our Lord living in St. Theresa and ruling her whole life. Let us thank him

for this model of perfection who was also so accomplished a teacher of the science of the saints.

Let us give our tribute of admiration to the Order of Carmel, which is her work. It is a school of the contemplative life. Who shall proclaim the countless blessings it has brought to the Church and the increase it has added to God's glory?

### CONSIDERATIONS

Let us consider St. Theresa's faithfulness to God in contemplation, in active labor, and in suffering.

1. *St. Theresa was faithful to God in the calm of contemplation.* Early in life she felt in the depth of her soul a longing for meditation. Our Lord made known to her that she would find him in the silence of prayer. No doubt this call of God was accompanied by a special aptitude for rising to God by meditation, with a separation from external things.

We must not think, however, that St. Theresa attained her perfection of contemplation without an active coöperation with God's grace. She herself relates the difficulties she encountered in the practice of prayer, the



weariness she felt in the beginning, the effort required to keep her soul recollected in the presence of God.

By the rules she has left for success in the practice of mental prayer, we may judge with what effort she acquired it. Before reaching those marvelous ecstasies that abounded in her life, she found it necessary, like a simple beginner, to prepare her subject of meditation, determine the points in advance, follow a certain method.

It may have been to reward St. Theresa for this fidelity that God made her the most perfect model of contemplative souls. He did, in fact, grant her a knowledge of the highest mysteries, a penetration of the deepest secrets of the soul's life, and ability to lead most eminent souls to spiritual perfection.

God also wishes to communicate himself to me by means of mental prayer: it is the great spiritual exercise of seminary life. Without it, I know I shall make but little progress. Hence, like St. Theresa, I should greatly esteem it and strive to master its difficulties.

2. *St. Theresa was faithful to God in active labor.* Prayer was not her sole occupation. Meditation inspired her activity, while her

deeds carried out her thoughts and resolutions. From her solitude, she exercised a veritable apostolate. Hers was the task of reforming the ancient and venerable Order of Carmel, which had fallen from its early fervor almost in every country, but especially in Spain. To this work, she consecrated her life.

She founded thirty-two convents in which she established her rule. Her activity also included a voluminous correspondence, numerous other writings, and a multitude of other affairs resulting from the reform movement which she had inaugurated. To all this, she heartily bent her efforts whenever the glory of God called her forth from her cherished life of contemplation.

She worked for God; God worked with her. He crowned her undertakings with success and astonishing fruitfulness. That the power of his grace might shine the more clearly, he permitted it to happen that a poor woman in a cloistered convent should surpass, in her labors for the Church, even the most illustrious apostolic men of the time.

Like St. Theresa, I am called to labor for God, for the Church, and for souls. That I may be fitted for that work, I must now apply

myself to another kind of labor, that of study. It is God's will and the obligation of this duty is most grave. It includes prayerfulness, meditation, and other exercises of the interior life; then comes the duty of study, to which I must devote most of my time to the exclusion of other distracting occupations however attractive they may be.

3. *St. Theresa was faithful to God in suffering.* There is only one thing on earth more sanctifying than prayer and work; it is the patient and even joyful submission to the trials of life. It gives the last touch to the interior beauty of our soul and raises us to the summit of perfection. *Patience hath a perfect work.*<sup>1</sup> says St. James.

We are familiar with the famous prayer of St. Theresa, prompted by her consuming love for God: *Domine aut pati aut mori*. To his devoted servant, the Savior gave an abundant share in the chalice of his passion. Her life was made up of successive sufferings and trials of every sort, verifying the maxim of the Imitation: *Sine dolore non vivitur in amore.*<sup>2</sup>

From her entrance into religion, her physi-

<sup>1</sup> JAMES 1<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> IMIT. III, 4<sup>6</sup>

cal ailments were so unbroken as to leave her no respite from pain, making her life a continual martyrdom. Still more painful were the sufferings of her soul. The feeling of desolation and dryness was the means that God employed to purify her soul and to bring about that complete detachment which God requires of those leading a life of perfection. In addition to these sufferings, St. Theresa experienced the trials arising from human contradiction and opposition.

I, too, must expect to bear a cross. Though I do not know what trials are reserved for me, I know that some I shall surely have. When our Lord sent his apostles forth, he promised them no rewards in this life, but rather persecutions. Hence, in all periods of the Church her priests have had crosses to bear. We are not ignorant of what sort they are in our day. If I lack the courage to ask for trials and sufferings, as did St. Theresa, at least I must be ready to accept with patient resignation those which God will send me.

### ACTS AND RESOLUTIONS

In this meditation I have been considering a model that every priest ought to be eager to

imitate. Heretofore, how has my life compared with this model? Have I been assiduously faithful to meditation? Have I obeyed the law of labor, which applies to me no less than to the rest of men? With what patience and resignation have I accepted trial and suffering?

I am humbled, my God, at the sight of my weakness and many failings. My numerous infidelities have hindered more perfect union with thee. Aided by thy grace, I will be more generous in the future. Grant me strength and courage.

I resolve:

1. To esteem meditation more heartily;
2. To resist the natural spirit of slothfulness;
3. To accept gladly all the hardships that I experience in living up to the rule of the seminary.

*The meditation of my heart shall be always in thy sight.*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ps. 18<sup>15</sup>

## XXIX

### ST. LUKE

#### SUMMARY

I. We will adore the Word of God revealing himself to us by the pen of the evangelists. We will join the Church in honoring St. Luke.

II. We will consider:

1. *St. Luke's eagerness to know the incarnate Word.* He wished to obtain a complete knowledge of the adorable person of Christ. He wished not to remain ignorant of anything the Savior said or did. Our principal object is likewise to know Christ.

2. *The sources from which St. Luke derived his knowledge of Christ.* He gathered information from those who knew and saw the Savior: the apostles, the sick whom Christ cured, and in particular, the Blessed Virgin. At the seminary we have no less numerous sources from which to acquire a knowledge of the incarnate Word. Let us consult them.

3. *The fruit which St. Luke derived from his knowledge of the Word incarnate.* He became attached to the teaching and the person of Christ. He was the companion of St. Paul. He gave the Church his gospel.

III. We will recall that to study Christ is easy in the

seminary. We will seek him in books, in our prayers and meditations.

We will resolve:

1. To ask our Lord, through St. Luke's intercession, for a more and more perfect knowledge of himself;

2. To read the Scriptures more attentively, seeking to find especially whatever refers to Christ:

3. To cultivate a special devotion to those saints who have most perfectly studied and known Christ.

*Grow in grace and in knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*

## ADORATION

Let us adore the Word of God made flesh, revealing himself to us by the pen of the evangelists. Through their writings the Savior remains present with us. We can therein contemplate his adorable person, study his life, and nourish our souls with his teaching.

It was his holy Spirit that inspired the evangelists. To them, he made himself known, initiating them to all the secrets of his divine person, being transfigured before them more perfectly than he was on Mount Thabor.

How signally our Lord honored those four among all his apostles and disciples in making them the historians of his life and the inter-

preters of his doctrine. Let us join the Church to-day in honoring St. Luke, the beloved disciple of St. Paul and the companion of his apostolic journeys.

### CONSIDERATIONS

In St. Luke, we admire particularly his serious and attentive study of the incarnate Word. Let us consider his eagerness to know the incarnate Word, the sources from which he derived that knowledge, and the fruits he derived from it.

1. *St. Luke's eagerness to know the incarnate Word.* Previous to him, several had undertaken to narrate the life of the God-man. *Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a narration of the things that have been accomplished among us.*<sup>1</sup> But they were not sufficient for him, they did not satisfy his ideal.

*It seemed good to me also, he wrote, having diligently attained to all things from the beginning, to write to thee in order, most excellent Theophilus.*<sup>2</sup> Understanding that in such a life not merely the great deeds are worth

<sup>1</sup> LUKE 1<sup>1</sup>

<sup>2</sup> LUKE. 1<sup>3</sup>



recording, but the smallest events and circumstances possess an interest and a value, he endeavored to obtain a complete knowledge of the adorable person of Christ. He wished not to remain ignorant of anything the Savior said or did. Hence his gospel presents, in greater number than the other gospels, those details, anecdotes, and parables that so much increase our interest in the life of Christ.

He goes back beyond the Savior's public life. In so doing, he furnishes much of priceless value which the other evangelists leave unsaid. St. Mark and St. John say nothing at all about the Savior's birth and the attending circumstances. St. Matthew has but a few words. It is to St. Luke's diligent study that we owe the inestimable treasure contained in the first two chapters of his gospel, in short, the story of the divine infancy.

It was by dint of persevering effort and patient investigation that St. Luke attained his perfect knowledge of Christ.

This same is the great object of our studies in the seminary. For this is above all a school where we learn to know Christ. We should esteem no other knowledge more than this. As we are destined to make Christ known to

others, it becomes our duty to acquire the most thorough knowledge possible of all that concerns him.

2. *The sources from which St. Luke derived his knowledge of Christ.* According to many interpreters, the evangelist had not the happiness, like St. Matthew and St. John, to see the incarnate Word with his own eyes. He had recourse, therefore, to the authority of witnesses. It was from those who knew and saw the Savior, that he gathered his information. *According as they have delivered them to us, who from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word.*<sup>1</sup>

The apostles, to whom Christ had entrusted his most intimate secrets, the sick whom he had cured, and his relatives according to the flesh were the chief source of the evangelist's knowledge. In particular was his knowledge increased by his conversations with the Blessed Virgin, whose intimate acquaintance with the mysteries of Christ surpassed that of any other creature, whom God left on earth that the Church might profit by her knowledge of her divine Son.

Is it not true that God furnishes me with

<sup>1</sup> LUKE 1<sup>2</sup>

no less numerous sources from which I may acquire a knowledge of the incarnate Word? The image of Christ which St. Luke reproduced in his gospel, continues visibly present in the Church. The inspired Scriptures, the liturgy, the writings of the saints, the treatises of theology, the lives of holy men, the instructions and exhortations that I receive, are all so many mirrors reflecting the traits which, when united, form Christ's image. But I must consult these witnesses, I must read these documents.

3. *The fruit which St. Luke derived from his knowledge of the Word incarnate.* St. Luke, having been instructed by the apostles, was already a Christian when he undertook the deep study of Christ's life. But this study attached him more closely to the teaching and person of the Master. In his zeal for the work of the apostolate he wished to be the inseparable companion of St. Paul, with whom he journeyed through Asia Minor and Europe, laboring courageously in the conquest of souls and the extension of Christ's kingdom. He shared the great apostle's fatigue and persecution and, according to an authorized tradition,

was blessed with the privilege of pouring out his blood for his divine Master.

St. Luke's study of Christ also gave the Church his gospel in which he consigned the fruit of his laborious researches. Without it, the Son of God would be but imperfectly known. It is a priceless treasure wherein souls may find nourishment for their piety, and sinners motives for trust in God.

I, too, should find this double fruit in the knowledge of Christ. While increasing my love for this divine Master, it will stimulate my desire for perfection, my determination to imitate this adorable model, and my longing to consecrate myself to his service.

If I know Christ, I shall be the more prepared to make him known. Is not the apostolic ministry an initiation of souls in the knowledge of the Word made flesh? What better preparation can there be than to initiate myself in that knowledge?

## ACTS AND RESOLUTIONS

In one word does the author of the Imitation sum up the fruit of this meditation. *Let it, then, be our chief study to meditate on the*

*life of Jesus Christ.*<sup>1</sup> To study Christ is easy in the seminary. I will seek him in books, in my prayers and meditations. In the words of Holy Writ, I will say to him: *Show me thy face, let thy voice sound in my ears.*<sup>2</sup> In conversation, I will speak of him. Each day, I will try to add something to his growing image in my heart so that, by the end of my seminary course, that image will be a true reproduction of the divine model.

I resolve:

1. To ask our Lord, through St. Luke's intercession, for a more and more perfect knowledge of himself.

2. To read the Scriptures more attentively, seeking to find especially whatever refers to Christ;

3. To cultivate a special devotion to those saints who have most perfectly studied and known Christ.

*Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I: 1<sup>1</sup>

<sup>2</sup> CANT. 2<sup>14</sup>

<sup>3</sup> II PET. 3<sup>18</sup>

## XXX

### ALL SAINTS

#### SUMMARY

I. We will place ourselves by faith in the heavenly Jerusalem. We will contemplate the full assembly of the blessed. We will rejoice at the glory which they now possess. We will honor them as friends of God, and we will adore our Lord as the king of saints and author of their happiness.

II. We shall see that we should have that expectant confidence toward the Church in heaven which the ancient patriarchs had for the reign of the Messias.

1. *A longe aspicientes.* The saints of the Old Law contemplated the Messianic reign from afar. Heaven should likewise be the object of our meditation. Heaven will be the end of our exile, the abode of peace, the place of recompense.

2. *Et salutantes.* The patriarchs greeted the coming of the Messias. We should greet the kingdom of heaven. The citizens of heaven are our brethren and friends. We can pray to them.

3. *Peregrini super terram.* The holy patriarchs felt only contempt for earth. We should consider ourselves as strangers on earth, seek our permanent dwelling in heaven, and not become attached to the passing attractions of the world. We should direct all our desires toward heaven.

III. We will reflect that of ourselves we are incapable of rising to the thought of things eternal. We will ask God for the grace which will enable us to succeed.

We will resolve to cultivate a greater devotion to our patron saints.

*We are the children of saints, and look for that life which God will give to those that never change their faith from him.*

### ADORATION

Each day the martyrology, after enumerating the saints honored on that day, concludes with this formula: *Et alibi, aliorum plurimorum sanctorum martyrum et confessorum, atque sanctarum virginum.* It is as though the Church regretted that she can not give us a complete list of the saints she has sent to heaven. But the feast of All Saints, commemorating them all, is a complement to the series of feasts celebrated during the year.

To-day, indeed, holy Church would have us contemplate the full assembly of the blessed. For us it is not merely, as it was for the Hebrews, *a mountain that might be touched and a burning fire and a whirlwind and darkness and storm . . .* But, says the great apostle, *you are come to mount Sion and to the city of*

*the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to the company of many thousands of angels and to the church of the first-born, who are written in the heavens, and to God the judge of all and to the spirits of the just made perfect and to Jesus the mediator of the new testament.*<sup>1</sup>

Let us rejoice at the blessedness and glory which they now possess. They are the friends of God, the living members of Christ, the master-pieces of grace, our models. Since we know their bliss does not hinder them from thinking of us and from interceding for us, let us place ourselves under their protection.

Let us not forget to honor the king of saints, our Lord Jesus Christ. To him, they owe their crown of glory. They know it was he who merited their reward by the pouring out of his blood. Says the Apocalypse: *They fell down before him . . . and adored him . . . and cast their crowns before the throne.*<sup>2</sup>

### CONSIDERATIONS

St. Paul, describing the faith of the ancient patriarchs, the expectant confidence with which they hoped for the reign of the Messias

<sup>1</sup> HEB. 12<sup>18, 22-23</sup>

<sup>2</sup> APOC. 4<sup>10</sup>



and the fulfillment of God's promises, sums up our duties toward the Church in heaven. *All these died according to faith, not having received the promises, but beholding them afar off and saluting them and confessing that they are pilgrims and strangers on the earth.*<sup>1</sup>

1. *A longe aspicientes.* The saints of the Old Law contemplated the Messianic reign from afar. About them, they saw only wretchedness and darkness: God unknown, the grossest idolatry everywhere, countless crimes and abominations. *They were, says St. Paul, in want, distressed, afflicted. . . . wandering in deserts, in mountains and in dens and in caves of the earth.*<sup>2</sup> But they were consoled by the prospect of God's glorious reign: *a longe aspicientes.* By the light of prophecy, they saw the splendors of that reign; grace flowed into their souls; the worship of God replaced that of idols; holiness and justice abounded.

Such is likewise our first duty toward our heavenly home, toward the Church triumphant, the full realization of the Messianic reign which the ancient world awaited. Heaven

<sup>1</sup> HEB. 11<sup>18</sup>

<sup>2</sup> HEB. 11<sup>37</sup>

should frequently be the object of our meditation. In that society of the blessed, all is purity, peace and charity.

The exile thinks of his fatherland, the soldier looks forward to the peace that will reward his valor, the laborer to the recompense of his work. Heaven is our fatherland, eternal glory will be our reward, God himself will be our recompense. Should not these thoughts frequently occupy our mind, should they not greatly influence our life? They will give us strength to bear the grief and trials of this life. We, like the saints of the Old Law, see God outraged and blasphemed, the Church persecuted, truth and justice trampled under foot, wickedness triumphant. Let us, then, contemplate the consoling blessedness of heaven. *A longe aspicientes.*

2. *Et salutantes.* The patriarchs greeted the coming of the Messias. Although separated from Christ by a considerable interval of time, they possessed his spirit, they shared in his grace, and by anticipation formed part of his Church.

The same should be true of our relations to the Church in heaven. For it is the society of our friends and brethren who await our

coming, who are solicitous for us, who fill the office of intercessors for us. We, too, should greet that kingdom of heaven from afar.

Let us imagine a traveler just coming into port after a long and dangerous voyage. On the shore he sees relatives and friends waiting to receive him. Though not yet able to join them or speak to them, he joyfully greets them from a distance. Such should be our relations with the saints reigning in heaven. We see them by faith and they see us. We can pray to them in order to obtain by their intercession the grace to imitate them on earth and to be one day united with them in glory.

The Church honors the saints, celebrates their feasts, places herself under their patronage, and invokes them with confidence. Let us imitate this example of the Church.

3. *Peregrini super terram*. The holy patriarchs, considering the splendors of the Messianic kingdom, felt only contempt for the earth and for things earthly. *Confessing that they are pilgrims and strangers on the earth.*<sup>1</sup> For, says St. Paul, *they that say these things do signify that they seek a country.*<sup>2</sup> They call

<sup>1</sup> HEB. 11<sup>13</sup>

<sup>2</sup> HEB. 11<sup>14</sup>

their life, however long it may be, a journey. *The days of my pilgrimage are few and evil.*<sup>1</sup> said Jacob to the king of Egypt. Holy Writ records these words of King David: *Hear my prayer, O Lord, . . . for I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner as all my fathers were.*<sup>2</sup> The ancient patriarchs lived in tents, which they carried from one place to another, thus expressing that they had here below no permanent dwelling.

St. Peter addresses the Christians of his time in these words: *Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, to refrain yourselves from carnal desires.*<sup>3</sup> What, in fact, is the longest life but a journey through the transient realities of this world, realities that will soon disappear? Heaven is the goal of this journey.

What folly, therefore, to become attached to the passing attractions of the world and to forget that true happiness for which God made us! An earnest traveller gives but a glance at the objects along his route. He is preoccupied solely with the goal of his journey. To be sure, we live in the world, but we should

<sup>1</sup> GEN. 47<sup>9</sup><sup>2</sup> PS. 38<sup>13</sup><sup>3</sup> I PET. 2<sup>11</sup>

not let our heart become attached to it. All our desires ought to be directed toward heaven. We repeat the cry of the Psalmist: *Woe is me, that my sojourning is prolonged.*<sup>1</sup> This, too, is St. Paul's thought when he says: *Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*<sup>2</sup> and in another place: *Having a desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ.*<sup>3</sup> Would that I might feel more keenly this holy longing for heaven!

#### ACTS AND RESOLUTIONS

I know that I ought to think of the saints, pray to them, and long to share their eternal bliss. My God, help me to cultivate these dispositions. I find that I am inclined to the earth. Things created, pleasures, and self-love hold me captive. To rise to the thought of things eternal, I must needs do violence to natural inclinations.

Thy grace will enable me to succeed. It will make the thought of heaven's eternal bliss very familiar to me; it will make me love the saints; it will give me a great confidence in their intercession; finally it will arouse in me

<sup>1</sup> PS. 119<sup>5</sup>    <sup>2</sup> ROM. 7<sup>24</sup>    <sup>3</sup> PHILIP. 1<sup>23</sup>

a disdain for things of earth and a consuming desire for heaven.

Grant me this grace, dear Lord. May it be a fruit of to-day's feast. After passing my life in this intercourse of faith with the saints, may I be united to them eternally in glory.

I resolve to cultivate a greater devotion to my patron saints.

*We are the children of saints, and look for that life which God will give to those that never change their faith from him.<sup>1</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> TOB. 2<sup>13</sup>

# XXXI

## ALL SOULS

### SUMMARY

I. We will adore the Holy Ghost inspiring the Church to establish this commemoration on the day after the feast of All Saints. It calls to mind the bonds that unite the three parts of the Church. We will adore the soul of Christ in his love for the Church suffering.

II. We will consider three reasons why we should pray for the souls in purgatory.

1. *Their suffering.* To compassionate suffering is a natural inclination. But no sufferings are comparable to those of purgatory.

2. *The bonds of union between them and us.* In the order of nature, they are related to us by blood, friendship, and gratitude. In the order of grace, they, like us, are members of Christ. In the order of glory, heaven is their goal as well as ours.

3. *A priestly duty.* God entrusts to us the mission of helping the holy souls. This duty is especially binding on God's ministers. It is an exercise of priestly zeal.

III. We will reflect on the example of the Church in devotion to the dead. We will ask ourselves whether we have used the means placed at our disposal to help the faithful departed.

We will resolve:

1. To recite the prayers for the dead with greater attention and devotion;

2. Often to apply to them the indulgences that we gain;

3. To offer up for them every day a decade of the beads or some other exercise of piety.

*It is therefore a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead.*

### ADORATION

Let us adore the Holy Ghost inspiring the Church to establish this commemoration of the souls in purgatory on the day following the joyous and triumphant feast of All Saints. Thus, we are brought into contact with the mysterious bonds which unite the three parts of the Church, separated now, yet forming one society, or rather one body with Christ for its head. The Church militant placed, so to speak, between the Church triumphant and the Church suffering, directs her attention to them in turn. Yesterday, she invited us to glorify the saints in heaven. To-day, she would have us in spirit descend to those dark confines where God's justice detains the souls of the just that are not yet pure enough to be admitted to heaven. Holy Church exhorts us to pray to God for their relief.



Let us adore the soul of Christ filled with a tender charity for that portion of his mystical body. Since it is his wish that we become his instruments in helping the souls in purgatory, let us ask him for the grace we need to fill that duty.

### CONSIDERATIONS

Let us consider three reasons why we should pray for the souls in purgatory.

1. *Their suffering.* Among the deepest and most noble inclinations of human nature is compassion for suffering and the desire to relieve it according to our power. Whatever suffers, even an irrational animal, arouses our sympathy. To witness distress and fail to offer what help we can, is in the judgment of all men a mark of a hard heart devoid of charity.

What sufferings are comparable to those of purgatory? Many of the Fathers have even said that, except for their duration and their accompanying despair, they are of the same nature as those of hell. A just notion of God's holiness and his opposition to even the slightest sin helps us to understand that it may, indeed, be so. In purgatory there are, there-

fore, souls expiating their sins and satisfying divine justice by indescribable suffering, beseeching us to come to their help. Our bodily eyes do not see their misery, our ears do not hear their cries of distress; but faith reveals them to us and holy Church reminds us of them. Can we resist their appeal?

2. *The bonds of union between them and us.* They call us friends: *Have pity on me, at least you, my friends.*<sup>1</sup> Let us consider their relations to us in the order of nature, grace, and glory.

*The order of nature.* Not only have they lived our life, many of them are related to us by ties of blood, friendship, or gratitude. If God should vouchsafe to us a view of the suffering souls, we would recognize friends who were formerly very dear to us, for whom we have mourned, whom we then soon forgot, and whom we now allow to suffer without even a thought of them. There are relatives, fellow-students, benefactors. Those for whom we would have gladly done anything while they were still on earth should not be left without our help now when they need it so much.

<sup>1</sup> JOB 19<sup>21</sup>

*The order of grace.* Like us, made members of Christ by baptism, they form part of the Church. They and we both possess in common the supernatural gifts of grace. The same faith enlightens them, the same hope sustains them, the same charity sanctifies them.

*The order of glory.* They are assured of one day possessing the blessedness of heaven. Heaven belongs to them. It is likewise our goal. There we shall join them to enjoy with them the eternal society of the saints.

3. *A priestly duty.* To help the souls in purgatory is a mission that God entrusts to us, an apostolate of charity that he imposes on us. The Church in purgatory is powerless to help itself. But God, in his mercy, grants us the privilege of interceding for them, with the assurance of being heard. By the efficacy of our prayers and good works, ours is the mission of abridging their suffering.

It is the duty of all children of the Church to pray for the souls in purgatory, the obligation is the more binding upon God's ministers. The interests of those poor souls is especially entrusted to the priest. Zeal for souls is a characteristic mark of priestly vocation. But

to pray for the dead is distinctly an exercise of that zeal.

The purpose of zeal is to bring souls to heaven. A priest, therefore, whose heart is moved by love for souls, does not think his duty is limited to the sanctification of the living. After having guided them along the road to heaven, he will continue, even after their death, to help them advance on the road to their eternal destination.

### ACTS AND RESOLUTIONS

My God, thy Church gives me an example of the devotion with which I must pray for the dead. Every day she remembers them in the sacrifice of the mass, she concludes each part of the divine office with a petition for their eternal repose, she permits countless indulgences to be applied to them, she encourages the performance of many good works for their relief, in fine, she has established this commemoration of All Souls as a special evidence of her solicitude for the faithful departed.

But these various means of aiding the holy souls become efficacious only if we make use of them. Have I imitated the Church in

her devotion to the holy souls? To be sure, I have grieved over the loss of relatives or friends. But then, have I not soon forgotten to pray for them?

Soon I shall be a priest. The Church will entrust to me the duty of addressing to God her supplications for the souls in purgatory; and the faithful, relying on the fervor of my prayers, will ask me to implore the mercy of God in favor of their deceased relatives and friends. Now is the time for me to cultivate a priestly zeal for the poor souls.

I resolve:

1. To recite the prayers for the dead with greater attention and devotion.

2. Often to apply to them the indulgences that I gain;

3. To offer up for them every day a decade of the beads or some other exercise of piety.

*It is therefore a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead.*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I MAC. 12<sup>46</sup>

## XXXII

### ST. CHARLES

#### SUMMARY

I. We will adore our Blessed Lord in his providential care of the Church. His divine protection was manifested in a visible manner especially at the time of St. Charles. We will join the Church in honoring St. Charles and we will thank our Lord for having given such a bishop to his Church.

II. We will consider St. Charles as the promoter, founder, and lawgiver of seminaries.

1. *The promoter.* St. Charles was the soul of the Council of Trent. He formulated the propositions to be incorporated into the conciliary decrees. He directed the deliberations of the Council on matters connected with reforms in the Church.

2. *The first founder.* After a visitation of his diocese, his first care was to establish seminaries. He founded six. St. Charles neglected no means to make his seminary at Milan a model. He was especially solicitous for the intellectual and spiritual direction of the students.

3. *The lawgiver.* The Council had indicated the rules that were to govern the seminaries. St. Charles applied these rules in detail. They have a special interest for us because they are almost

identical with ours. We may say that all seminaries are the work of St. Charles.

III. St Charles regards the seminarians of our day as the brethren of those levites of Milan to whom he devoted so much care in his seminaries. He is our protector and patron. Through his intercession, we will ask God to keep the spirit of fervor flourishing in our seminaries.

We will resolve to entertain a deep respect for the seminary rule and to follow it with greater exactness.

*The high priest, who in his life propped up the house and in his days fortified the temple.*

#### ADORATION

Let us adore our Blessed Lord in his providential care of the Church. To found it, he came down to earth, and it has been the object of his constant thought. To enlighten it, he preached a divine doctrine during his mortal life; to sanctify it, he shed the last drop of his blood on the cross; to spread it over the face of the earth, he conferred on his apostles the august powers of the priesthood. Although by his Ascension he seems to have departed from it, yet he has never ceased to protect and defend it.

This divine protection of the Church has ever been manifested in a visible manner.

We find it revealed in the strength of the martyrs, for they vanquished tyrants; in the learning of holy doctors, for they overcame heresies; in the zeal of apostolic men inspired by God's Holy Spirit to combat laxity in the Church and to revive the spiritual life in men's souls; in the succession of shepherds appointed by God to govern his Church, to preserve therein the purity of teaching and morals, and to dispense the sacred treasures of grace.

In the time of St. Charles, the Church was passing through a fearful crisis. There was heresy without and laxity within, even among the clergy. When it seemed that the gates of hell were going to prevail against the Church, God raised up in the ranks of the clergy strong men mighty in word and deed, whose burning zeal brought about a salutary reform.

St. Charles was the most active instrument of this blessed reform. Let us join with the Church to-day in honoring this great archbishop. He is a model for all priests, the heavenly protector of seminaries. By imitating him, we will become priests of sterling zeal and courage, ready to face any danger and undergo any sacrifice.



Let us thank our Lord for having given such a bishop to his Church.

### CONSIDERATIONS

Of all the zealous undertakings of St. Charles we are especially interested in the work of founding seminaries. Let us consider him as the promoter of this work, its first founder, its lawgiver.

1. *The promoter.* The Council of Trent, called for the purpose of providing an effective remedy for the great evils that were desolating the Church, adopted a plan of reform intended at least to diminish the number and gravity of abuses. As part of this plan we find the establishment of seminaries. The decree ordered every bishop to open a seminary in his diocese and it laid down the main lines on which these seminaries were to be organized.

This part of the proceedings of the Council of Trent was the work of St. Charles. In fact, the reassembling of the Council after it had broken up and dispersed was due to his perseverance and initiative. Nor did he accomplish this happy result without overcoming great obstacles and opposition of all

kinds. He was the directing genius, the soul of this historic Council. He even formulated the propositions that were to be incorporated into the conciliary decrees. Although unable to leave Rome, he directed the deliberations of this reforming council.

Among the most salutary reforms prescribed by the Council was the establishment of seminaries. As this was the fruit of St. Charles' zeal, we may rightly consider him as the true promoter of the foundation of seminaries, a work that has effected incalculable good in promoting a lofty standard of learning and zeal in the priesthood. If some day we become good and holy priests, it will be due, in no small measure, to this work of St. Charles.

2. *The first founder.* St. Charles Borromeo lost no time in carrying out the provisions of the Tridentine decrees. The reforms that he brought about in the diocese of Milan were but the application of the new legislation inaugurated by those decrees.

After a general visitation of his vast diocese, his first care was to establish several seminaries where priests and clerics would cultivate the knowledge and virtues proper to their state. Thus was he the first founder of seminaries.

His biographers tell us that he founded six seminaries for the various classes of students. The most celebrated one was at Milan, intended for those whose superior talents and dispositions of piety gave promise of great fruit. Philosophy and theology were taught, as in our seminaries to-day.

St. Charles neglected no means to make this a model seminary. He was especially solicitous for the intellectual and spiritual direction of the seminary. Not only did he provide teachers on whose ability and piety he could rely, but he frequently visited the seminary himself and made personal inquiry of each student's progress.

Thus did this great bishop of Milan train apostolic workers for his diocese. Soon they were able to wonderfully transform the spiritual aspect of Milan. There was a reform of morality, a new regard for religious practices, a fervor of devotion in place of the former laxity. All this was due, under God, to the work of the seminary.

3. *The lawgiver.* The Council had indicated, in a summary way, the rules that were to govern the new seminaries. St. Charles com-

pleted these regulations, drawing up a code of laws that is a real masterpiece of wisdom.

The saintly bishop enters into the minutest details. No work of his better shows his tact, prudence, practical common sense, and priestly zeal. But these regulations have a special interest for us because they are almost identical with ours.

There were the same exercises of piety; meditation, mass, examen of conscience, frequentation of the sacraments. Quite similar, too, was the course of studies. Their rule prescribed the same observance of silence, modesty and obedience. The students made their beds and kept their rooms in order. They were admonished to exercise fraternal charity toward one another during recreation, to avoid particular friendships. In short, their rule of life differed but slightly from that under which we are living.

So wise and prudent were the rules laid down by St. Charles that the seminaries of succeeding ages have simply reproduced them for their own guidance. The spirit of the saintly lawgiver of Milan still animates these houses where generations of zealous priests have received their training.

## ACTS AND RESOLUTIONS

St. Charles, looking down from heaven, regards the seminarians of our day as the brethren of those young levites of Milan to whom he devoted so much care in his seminaries. He is our protector and patron. Through his intercession, let us ask God to keep the spirit of fervor flourishing in our seminaries and to maintain the practice of those solid virtues which have always been so important in the character of worthy priests.

Do thou, blessed saint of God, inspire us with a lofty idea of the priesthood as thou didst for the clergy of Milan, so that after a novitiate marked by industry, fervor, and obedience, we may enter upon a ministry fruitful in consolation for the Church, in bringing souls to God, and in promoting his glory among men.

I resolve to entertain a deep respect for the seminary rule and to follow it with greater exactness.

*The high priest, who in his life propped up the house, and in his days fortified the temple.<sup>1</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> ECCLUS. 50<sup>1</sup>



## INDEX

Abuse of grace.....	I, 204
Acceptance of death.....	I, 150
Acts, Motives for the perfection of ordinary...	II, 333
Acts, What constitutes the perfection of ordinary,	II, 343
Advantages of fraternal charity.....	II, 106
Advantages of humility.....	II, 203
All Saints.....	VI, 230
All Souls.....	VI, 239
Almsgiving.....	II, 136
Aloysius, St.....	VI, 173
Altar, The priest at the.....	III, 378
Ambrose, St.....	VI, 99
Angels, The Guardian.....	VI, 206
Annual retreat.....	III, 153
Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin.....	VI, 45
Apostles' retreat, The.....	V, 169
Aquinas, St. Thomas.....	VI, 141
Ascension, The.....	V, 161
Ash Wednesday.....	IV, 214
Assumption of the Blessed Virgin.....	VI, 78
Authority of the rule.....	III, 291
Bad example.....	II, 156
Baptist, St. John.....	VI, 180
Barnabas, St.....	VI, 165
Blessed Sacrament, Visit to the.....	III, 79

Blessed Virgin, Devotion of the.....	VI, 1, 8
Blessed Virgin, The Annunciation of the.....	VI, 45
Blessed Virgin, The Assumption of the.....	VI, 78
Blessed Virgin, The Compassion of the.....	VI, 69
Blessed Virgin, The Immaculate Conception,	VI, 15
Blessed Virgin, The Month of the.....	VI, 84
Blessed Virgin, The Nativity of the.....	VI, 23
Blessed Virgin, The Presentation of the ..	VI, 30, 38
Blessed Virgin, The Purification of the.....	VI, 61
Blessed Virgin, The Seven Dolors of the ....	V, 36
Blessed Virgin, The Visitation of the.....	VI, 53
Blood, The Precious.....	V, 244
Bodily mortification.....	II, 250
Breviary, The.....	III, 53
Burial of Christ (Holy Saturday).....	V, 88
Certainties of death, The.....	I, 123
Chant, Ecclesiastical.....	III, 235
Charity, Advantages of fraternal.....	II, 106
Charity, Marks of true fraternal.....	II, 114
Charity, Practice of fraternal.....	II, 124
Charles, St.....	VI, 246
Chastity.....	II, 269
Christ, Confidence in.....	II, 39
Christ, The burial of (Holy Saturday).....	V, 88
Christ, The five wounds of.....	V, 55
Christ, The prayer of.....	V, 154
Christ, The propitiatory life of.....	V, 9
Christ, The study of.....	IV, 124
Christ, The temptations of (First Sunday of Lent).....	IV, 221
Christ, The Visits of.....	IV, 46



Christ, The visits of the risen (Low Sunday)	V, 116
Christ crucified.....	V, 68
Christ in the Garden of Olives.....	V, 23
Christ our King (Palm Sunday).....	V, 48
Christian sadness.....	IV, 207
Christmas.....	IV, 65
Christman, Preparing for.....	IV, 56
Church, Struggles of the infant.....	V, 200
Church, The primitive.....	V, 191
Church History.....	III, 211
Churches, Dedication of.....	V, 125
Circumcision, The.....	IV, 82
Coming of God, The.....	IV, 1
Communion, Holy.....	III, 133
Compassion of the Blessed Virgin.....	VI, 69
Conception, The Immaculate.....	VI, 15
Confession.....	III, 122
Confidence in Christ.....	II, 39
Confidence in God.....	II, 29
Confidence in God, Lack of.....	II, 49
Conscience, Examination of.....	III, 91
Consolations, Spiritual.....	V, 132
Continence.....	III, 366
Conversion.....	I, 214
Conversion of St. Paul.....	VI, 125
Corpus Christi.....	V, 223
Creator, God the.....	I, 8
Cross, The Exaltation of the Holy.....	V, 250
Cross, The finding of the.....	V, 176
Cross, The standard of the.....	V, 1
Cross, The way of the.....	V, 62

Crowning with thorns, The.....	V,	29
Crucified, Christ.....	V,	68
Death, The acceptance of.....	I,	150
Death, The certainties of.....	I,	123
Death, The probabilities of.....	I,	141
Death, The uncertainties of.....	I,	132
Dedication of churches, The.....	V,	125
Degrees in the love of God.....	II,	78
Descent of the Holy Ghost, The.....	V,	183
Devotion to the infant Savior.....	IV,	74
Devotion to the Blessed Virgin: its founda- tion.....	VI,	1
Devotion to the Blessed Virgin: its history...	VI,	8
Easter Sunday: the resurrection.....	V,	101
Ecclesiastical chant.....	III,	235
Efficacy of prayer (Rogation days).....	V,	146
Encouragements in the priesthood.....	III,	424
End, God our last.....	I,	17
Epiphany.....	IV,	116
Eternity, The priest, a witness to.....	IV,	107
Eternity, The thought of.....	IV,	99
Eucharist, The (Holy Thursday).....	V,	79
Evil of mortal sin, The.....	I,	64
Exaltation of the holy cross, The.....	V,	250
Examination of conscience.....	III,	91
Example, Bad.....	II,	156
Excellence of God's being, The.....	I,	1
Excellence of the love of God.....	II,	68
Exercises of piety.....	III,	1
Exercises of piety, Routine in.....	III,	11
External joy .....	V,	139

Faith.....	II,	1
Faith, Profession of.....	II,	19
Faith, The life of.....	II	10
Family, The holy.....	IV,	175
Finding of the cross, The.....	V,	176
First Sunday of Lent: The temptations of Christ.....	IV,	221
Five wounds of Christ, The.....	V,	55
Forty hours' devotion: Quinquagesima.....	IV,	199
Foundation of devotion to the Blessed Virgin.....	VI,	1
Fourth Sunday of Lent: the multiplication of the loaves.....	IV,	246
Francis de Sales, St.....	VI,	134
Francis Xavier, St.....	VI,	90
Fraternal charity, Advantages of.....	II,	106
Fraternal charity, Marks of true.....	II,	114
Fraternal charity, Practice of.....	II,	124
Garden of Olives, Jesus in the.....	V,	23
General judgment, The.....	I,	166
God, Confidence in.....	II,	29
God, Degrees in the love of.....	II,	78
God, Lack of confidence in.....	II,	49
God, Motives for loving.....	II,	59
God, The coming of.....	IV,	1
God, The excellence of the love of.....	II,	68
God, The mercy of.....	I,	26
God, The people of.....	IV,	12
God, The practice of the love of.....	II,	86
God, The providence of.....	I,	26
God, The thought of.....	I,	36

God, our last end.....	I, 17
God, the Creator.....	I, 8
God's being, The excellence of.....	I, 1
Good Friday: The Passion as the principal object of sacerdotal meditation.....	V, 81
Grace, The abuse of.....	I, 204
Grace, The value of.....	I, 196
Guardian angels.....	VI, 206
Heart, The Sacred.....	V, 229
Heaven.....	I, 186
Hell.....	I, 176
History, Church.....	III, 211
History of devotion to the Blessed Virgin.....	VI, 8
History of the Holy Name, The.....	IV, 139
Holy communion.....	III, 133
Holy Cross, The exaltation of the.....	V, 250
Holy Name, The.....	IV, 131
Holy Name, The history of the.....	IV, 139
Holy Scripture.....	III, 188
Holy family, The.....	IV, 175
Holy Ghost, The descent of the.....	V, 183
Holy lance and nails, The.....	V, 42
Holy Saturday: The burial of Christ.....	V, 88
Holy Shroud, The.....	V, 95
Holy Thursday: The Eucharist.....	V, 74
Holy Trinity, The.....	V, 216
Humility, Advantages of.....	II, 203
Humility, Sins against.....	II, 221
Humility, The nature of.....	II, 193
Humility, The practice of.....	II, 212
Humility in a priest.....	II, 231

- I am the Life.....IV, 161  
 I am the Truth.....IV, 154  
 I am the Way.....IV, 146  
 Immaculate Conception of the Blessed  
     Virgin.....VI, 15  
 Incarnation, The prelude of the.....IV, 22  
 Infant Church, Struggles of the.....V, 200  
 Infant Savior, Devotion to the.....IV, 74  
 Interior life.....II, 323  
 Interior life of our Lord, The.....V, 236  
 Interior peace.....II, 314  
  
 Jesus. See Christ  
 Jesus in Mary, The life of.....IV, 35  
 John the Baptist, St.....VI, 180  
 John the Evangelist, St.....VI, 108  
 Joseph, St.....VI, 149  
 Joy, External.....V, 139  
 Judgment, The general.....I, 166  
 Judgment, The particular.....I, 158  
  
 Laborers in the vineyard: Septuagesima.....IV, 183  
 Lack of confidence in God.....II, 49  
 Lance and nails, The holy.....V, 42  
 Last end, God our.....I, 17  
 Last things, The.....I, 113  
 Life, I am the.....IV, 161  
 Life, Interior.....II, 323  
 Life of Christ, The propitiatory.....V, 9  
 Life of faith, The.....II, 10  
 Life of Jesus in Mary, The.....IV, 35  
 Life of our Lord, The interior.....V, 236



Mortification, Bodily.....	II, 250
Mortification, Spiritual.....	II, 260
Motives for loving God.....	II, 59
Motives for the love of our neighbor.....	II, 96
Motives for the perfection of ordinary acts,	II, 333
Motives of perseverance.....	I, 224
Multiplication of the loaves: Fourth Sunday of Lent.....	IV, 462
Nails, the holy lance and.....	V, 42
Name, The Holy.....	IV, 131
Name, The history of the Holy.....	IV, 139
Nativity of the Blessed Virgin.....	VI, 23
Nature of humility.....	II, 193
Neighbor, Motives for the love of our.....	II, 96
Night prayers.....	III, 113
Obedience.....	II, 183
Obligation, Study as an.....	III, 164
Observance of the rule.....	III, 302
Obstacles in the priesthood.....	III, 412
Obstacles to perseverance.....	I, 224
Orders, Major.....	III, 332
Orders, Minor.....	III, 321
Palm Sunday (Jesus, our King).....	V, 48
Particular judgment, The.....	I, 158
Passion as the principal subject of sacerdotal meditation (Good Friday).....	V, 81
Passion, The value of the soul taught by the,	V, 16
Passion Sunday: The standard of the cross...V,	1

Passions.....	II, 303
Paul, The conversion of St.....	VI, 125
Paul, SS. Peter and.....	VI, 189
Patience.....	II, 174
Peace, Interior.....	II, 314
Penance.....	II, 240
Penance, The priest in the tribunal of.....	III, 388
People of God, The.....	IV, 12
Perfection of ordinary acts, Motives of the,	II, 333
Perfection of ordinary acts, What constitutes the.....	II, 343
Perseverance, Motives of.....	I, 224
Perseverance, Obstacles to.....	I, 234
Peter, SS. and Paul.....	VI, 189
Peter's, St., chair at Rome.....	VI, 117
Piety, Exercises of.....	III, 1
Piety, Routine in exercises of.....	III, 11
Poverty, The spirit of.....	III, 353
Practice of fraternal charity.....	II, 24
Practice of humility.....	II, 212
Practice of the love of God.....	II, 86
Prayer, Efficacy of (Rogation days).....	V, 146
Prayer of Christ, The.....	V, 154
Prayers, Night.....	III, 113
Precious Blood, The.....	V, 244
Prelude of the Incarnation, The.....	IV, 22
Preparing for Christmas.....	IV, 56
Presentation of the Blessed Virgin: Mary's consecration.....	VI, 30
Presentation of the Blessed Virgin: Mary's life in the Temple.....	VI, 38



Priest, Humility in a.....	II, 231
Priest, The sin of a.....	I, 86
Priest, a witness to eternity.....	IV, 107
Priest at the altar, The.....	III, 378
Priest in the pulpit, The.....	III, 400
Priest in the tribunal of penance, The.....	III, 388
Priesthood, The.....	III, 342
Priesthood, Encouragements in the.....	III, 424
Priesthood, Obstacles in the.....	III, 412
Primitive Church, The.....	V, 191
Probabilities of death, The.....	I, 141
Profession of faith.....	II, 19
Progress, Spiritual.....	I, 243
Propitiatory life of Christ.....	V, 9
Providence of God, The.....	I, 26
Pulpit, The priest in the.....	III, 400
Punishment of mortal sin, The.....	I, 78
Purification of the Blessed Virgin.....	VI, 61

Quinquagesima Sunday: The forty hours' devotion.....	IV, 199
--	---------

Reading, Spiritual.....	III, 67
Recreation.....	III, 254
Relapse (Third Sunday of Lent).....	IV, 238
Religion.....	II, 164
Resurrection, The (Easter Sunday).....	V, 101
Retreat, Annual.....	III, 153
Retreat, Monthly.....	III, 145
Retreat, The Apostles'.....	V, 169
Risen Christ, The visits of the.....	V, 116
Risen Savior, The.....	V, 109

Rising, The sanctification of.....	III, 21
Rogation days: Efficacy of prayer.....	V, 146
Rosary, The.....	III, 103
Routine in exercises of piety.....	III, 11
Rule, Authority of the.....	III, 291
Rule, Observance of the.....	III, 302
Sacerdotal meditation, The Passion as the principal subject of.....	V, 81
Sacred Heart, The.....	V, 229
Sadness, Christian.....	IV, 207
Saints, All.....	VI, 230
Sales, St. Francis de.....	VI, 134
Salvation.....	I, 52
Sanctification of rising, The.....	III, 21
Sanctification of study, The.....	III, 177
Savior, The risen.....	V, 109
Scripture, Holy.....	III, 188
Second Sunday of Lent: The Transfiguration.....	IV, 230
Seminary, The.....	III, 281
Septuagesima Sunday: The laborers in the vineyard.....	IV, 183
Seven dolors of the Blessed Virgin.....	V, 36
Sexagesima Sunday: The word of God.....	IV, 191
Shroud, The holy.....	V, 95
Sicut parvuli.....	IV, 168
Sin, The evil of mortal.....	I, 64
Sin, The punishment of mortal.....	I, 78
Sin, The state of a soul in mortal.....	I, 70
Sin, Venial.....	I, 95
Sin of a priest, The.....	I, 86
Sins against humility.....	II, 221

Soul, The value of the.....	V,	16
Soul in mortal sin, The state of a.....	I,	70
Souls, All.....	VI,	239
Spirit of poverty, The.....	III,	353
Spiritual consolation.....	V,	132
Spiritual mortification.....	II,	260
Spiritual progress.....	I,	243
Spiritual reading.....	III,	67
Standard of the cross, The.....	V,	1
State of a soul, in mortal sin.....	I,	70
Struggles of the infant Church.....	V,	200
Study, The sanctification of.....	III,	177
Study as an obligation.....	III,	164
Studying Christ.....	IV,	124
Temptations of Christ, The.....	IV,	221
Temptations.....	II,	292
Theology.....	III,	200
Theresa, St.....	VI,	214
Third Sunday of Lent: Relapse.....	IV,	238
Thomas Aquinas, St.....	VI,	141
Thorns, The crowning with.....	V,	29
Thought of eternity, The.....	IV,	99
Thought of God, The.....	I,	36
Time.....	IV,	91
Tonsure.....	III,	312
Transfiguration, The.....	IV,	230
Trinity, The Holy.....	V,	216
Truth, I am the.....	IV,	154
Uncertainties of death, The.....	I,	132
Value of grace, The.....	I,	196

Value of the soul taught by the Passion.....	V,	16
Venial sin.....	I,	95
Vigilance.....	II,	282
Vincent de Paul, St.....	VI,	198
Virgin, Blessed. See Blessed Virgin		
Visit to the Blessed Sacrament.....	III,	79
Visitation of the Blessed Virgin, The.....	VI,	53
Visits of Jesus, The.....	IV,	46
Visits of the risen Christ, The.....	V,	116
Vocation.....	III,	269
Vocation (Pentecost).....	V,	209
Way, I am the.....	IV,	146
Way of the cross, The.....	V,	62
What constitutes the perfection of ordinary acts.....	II,	343
Word of God, The.....	IV,	191
Wounds of Christ, The five.....	V,	55
Xavier, St. Francis.....	VI,	90
Zeal.....	II,	146







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Branchereau, Louis,  
1819-1913.

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